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ABSTRACT

This extension education publication contains insights and tools to help community members develop a strategic vision and action plan for their community. Presented first are an executive summary and an introduction that includes 10 reasons for a strategic visioning process. The first section, which deals with harnessing the power of vision, explains the processes of strategic thinking/planning/visioning, lists six elements of a good vision, and discusses the role of visioning in empowering communities. A 10-step community development process is outlined, discussed in detail, and then illustrated through case studies. The strategic visioning component of the process is examined in detail, and sample strategic visioning meeting agendas and case studies are presented. Concluding the publication is a summary sample plan. Eleven figures and 24 references are included. Appended are the following: steps in evaluating existing community plans; sample vision statements; test for determining if a statement is a mission statement or vision statement; list of 12 keys to a successful strategic visioning and action process; sample written agreements of commitment; sample themes, slogans, mottos, and goals; benchmark indicators; building scenarios; cause and effect diagram; hypothetical scenario of a community celebration in 2005; and strategic vision and action plan worksheet. (MN)

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Harnessing The Power of Vision

TEN STEPS TO CREATING A STRATEGIC VISION AND ACTION PLAN FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

Preparing Your Community for the 21st Century SERIES

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Harnessing The Power of Vision

TEN STEPS TO CREATING A STRATEGIC VISION AND ACTION PLAN FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

By:
Mark Peterson
Cooperative Extension Service
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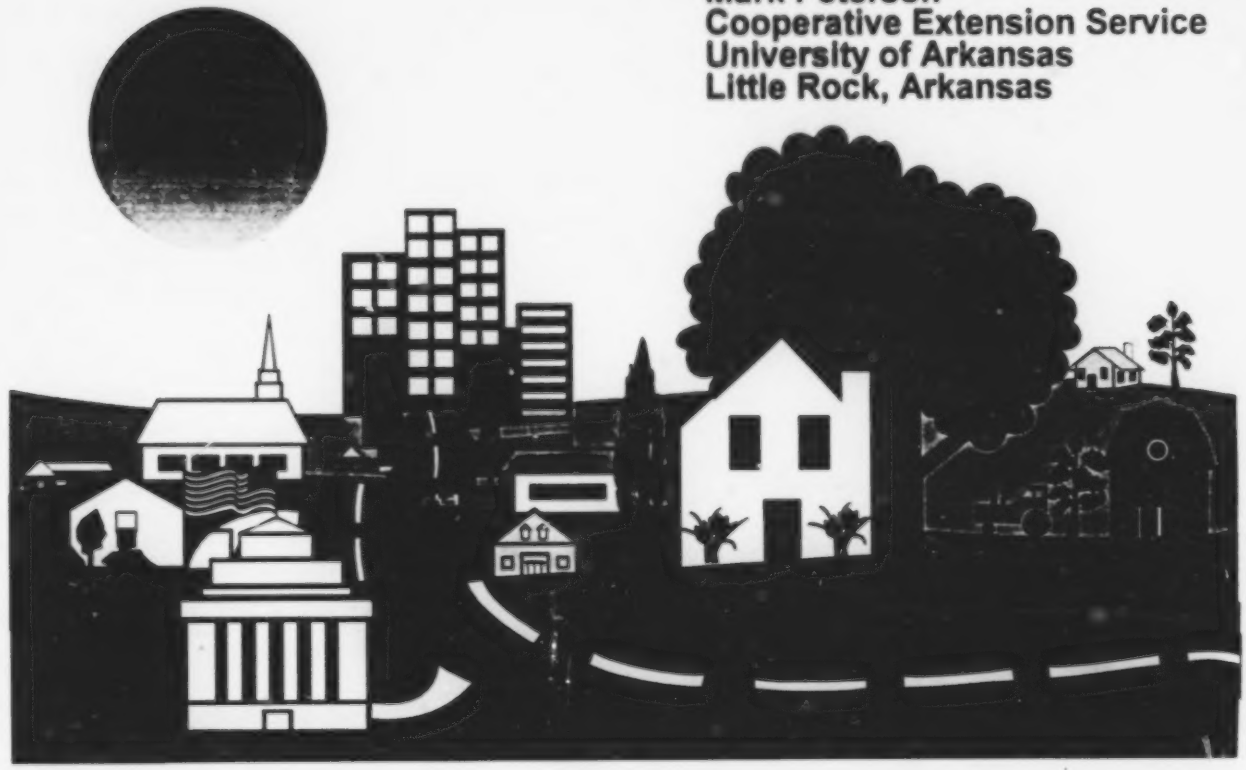
Little Rock, Arkansas



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An African proverb says **"It takes a whole village to raise a child."** The corollary here is that it takes a whole cadre of friends, community leaders, and colleagues to do justice to the subject of creating a strategic vision and action plan that will carry your community into the 21st century. This publication is the result of 18 months of deliberations and trial processes in several communities. Our experience confirms Tom Peters' dictum for the 1990s, that we should **get ready, fire, then take aim**, because in times of rapid change we often learn the most from our experiences – through trial and error.

It takes a whole village to raise a child.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are standing on the threshold of the 21st century and the next millennium, trying to focus our eyes on what lies ahead for us and our communities. Although our foresight is imperfect, all evidence leads us to conclude that the global economy, the explosion of information, and the current technological revolution promise to shape our destinies in profound ways.

In the face of such far-reaching changes in our world, focusing on **actions we can take now** that will prepare our communities for the new millennium is important. There is a rich history of community development experience and literature that confirms the effectiveness of citizens who utilize various approaches to improve their communities. This publication builds on that experience, and describes a ten step community development process with a strategic visioning component.

Each section of this publication contributes insight and tools that will assist you in developing a strategic vision and action plan in your community. Harnessing the Power describes the power of vision – a compelling mental image of your desired future – and its ability to motivate people to take action. Six elements of a good vision are described, and the basics of a vision community, a community united around a common vision, are presented.

Community development is an act of midwifery – of a community giving birth to its future.

Community development is an act of midwifery – of a community giving birth to its future. The process engages an entire community in the important process of planning and working to achieve its desired future. The strategic visioning component focuses on these key questions: 1) Where have you been? 2) Where are you now? 3) Where do you want to go? 4) How will you get there? 5) How will you know when you are there?

The result is a simple but powerful process that **honors the past, assesses the present, and stimulates our minds to describe our desired future.** It then moves us quickly to action projects that will shape that future. In addition, the use of benchmark indicators provides a frame of reference for us to gauge success.

This process can be used with **a community, a larger area, or a single issue**. The strategic visioning component can also be used with organizations. Overviews explain the overall community development process and the strategic visioning component with other sections providing more detail. A **Strategic Vision and Action Plan Worksheet** is included at the end of the publication, and can be copied and used.

The essence of this publication – its ultimate purpose – is well summarized by these words of William Jennings Bryan:

> **Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved.**

INTRODUCTION

Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up.
It knows it must outrun the fastest lion
or it will be killed.

Every morning in Africa, a lion wakes up. It
knows it must run faster than the slowest
gazelle or it will starve.

It doesn't matter whether you're a lion or a
gazelle – when the sun comes up, you'd
better be running.

Sue Tabor, General Manager
Nordstroms, San Francisco

We live in extraordinary times – times of tremendous challenges and great opportunities. Never has there been a greater need to plan for the future – for when sun comes up and for the 21st century, as today. Many issues and problems faced by Arkansas communities are complex, affecting multiple dimensions of community life, and requiring the whole community to work together to address them. Although individual organizations are often successful with particular activities, there is **a tremendous advantage and a powerful synergy** that develops when the whole community works together to describe its vision for the future, and bring that vision to reality.

A light bulb held next to a steel plate will barely warm the plate. A laser operated with the same power cuts through the steel plate. It **focuses and channels** the energy into a narrow beam. This strategic visioning process **focuses and channels** the energy, creativity, and ideas of citizens and leaders into a powerful strategic vision and action plan. It builds on the many good things that are taking place in your community, aligning them in a common direction and creating new impetus for their completion.

Great communities are just ordinary communities that have committed themselves with enthusiasm to a vision of greatness.

The principles and process described in this publication are based on significant works in the community development, organizational development, and planning literature; over 20 years of experience in community development; and personal involvement in many strategic visioning processes. There is **a long history** of successful community development efforts in this country and in the world – **of local communities taking charge of their destinies**. This publication builds on that history and describes a practical but powerful, planning process that takes place within an overall community development process – the ten steps described herein.

This development process is **driven by community leaders** – those of you willing to take responsibility – and your desires, aspirations, and dreams for your community. Outside experts can play a useful role, but only a process driven and owned by the citizens and leaders of your community will succeed.

This is a **knowledge- and capacity-based development process**, starting with the tremendous knowledge that you all have of your community and the capacities you have within your community.

You are the inside experts who know more about your community than anyone else.

You are the agents for change, and the agents for preservation.

You are the midwives who help your community give birth to its desired future.

Ten Reasons for a Strategic Visioning Process

Top Ten Reasons Why Your Community Should Initiate A Strategic Visioning Process

10) Somebody sneezes and **dust flies off your old plan**.
9) Half of your community **doesn't know** if you have a strategic plan.
8) The other half of your community **doesn't care** if you have a strategic plan.
7) Your economic base is slipping, you have lost a major employer, and there is a general sense that your community is **adrift in the global economy**.
6) You know in your heart that your community is capable of great things if you could all just come together for a common effort. What you need is **a triggering mechanism**.
5) Your existing plan **is not really a plan.** It is a list of activities that would be good to do, rather than a systematic examination of your community, a strategic vision for your future, an action plan with responsibilities assigned, and a timeline for completion.
4) Your existing plan **is not really strategic**. It is a cookie-cutter plan borrowed from another community that does not build on the unique strengths and capabilities of your community, or an understanding of the emerging environment in your region.
3) Your existing plan **has no vision**. It is a projection of the status quo based on existing resources, rather than a compelling mental image of a desired future that energizes your community to take charge of its future.
2) You don't want to look back on your community ten years from now and **wish you had taken action**.
1) You realize that a strategic vision and action plan that is bold, compelling, and embraced by the entire community is **one of the most powerful engines to drive a community toward long-term success**.

NOTE: Perhaps just as important is to know that **a strategic visioning and action process should not be undertaken when:**
– the community is seeking a quick fix of some problem,
– the process is driven by an individual with a hidden agenda,
– support is lacking from a broad base of community leaders, and/or
– the community is not willing to commit its resources to the plan.

Helpful Reference

If you already have a strategic plan but are wondering whether you need to revisit the plan and initiate a new action process, refer to Appendix A: If You Already Have a Plan.

A True Story

The time was October, 1987. The place was a rustic retreat lodge near the Lake of the Ozarks in Missouri. The day was clear and crisp. The leaves were near their peak color. **It was a great day to be alive.**

Four of us were involved in planning and implementing a three-day training session on the subject: **Empowerment of Individuals and Communities**. The idea of empowerment was relatively new at that time, and we were excited about the possibilities. Forty-five professional educators from all across the state participated in this training, having chosen this session over several other choices. There was a sense of expectancy in the large room as the participants greeted old friends and settled around tablecloth covered tables.

We began with some get-acquainted activities. The participants were loosening up, ready for a stimulating learning experience. The morning was devoted to sharing some concepts about individual empowerment, followed by exercises which applied those concepts our lives. They seemed interested, even eager to use these tools.

We then moved to the topic of empowering communities. Although we didn't tell them this up front, we decided to try a little experiment. *The Power of Vision* videotape had been out for a short time, and some of us thought the notion of vision could be useful for communities.

We explained that the large group would be divided into two smaller groups, each of which would go through an empowerment process. The objective was to **arrive at a common direction for their imagined communities**. They were to reflect on their own community, with its particular strengths and weaknesses, and consider themselves as citizens at a town meeting.

The second group was all excited, having created a magnificent vision of their community that provided meaning to their lives and inspiration to realize that vision.

We asked the group to count off in 1's and 2's, with the first group going into one room and the second group into another. The first group was led through a **problem solving process** that listed problems in the community, prioritized those problems, and identified resources and action steps necessary to address those problems. The second group was led through a **strategic visioning process**, in which they discussed what they liked about their community, created a strategic vision of what they want their community to be in the future, and developed an action plan to bring that vision into reality.

After forty-five minutes, the two groups came back together to report their results. The first group was depressed, beat down by the realization that their long list of problems would obviously require massive assistance from outside their community – an event unlikely to take place. After all, **few people would prefer to live in a community with many insurmountable problems.** The second group was all excited, having created a magnificent vision of their community that provided meaning to their lives and inspiration to realize that vision.

When it became evident that each group went through a different process, we explained what we had done. A surprise to us, there was **ANGER** from the first group who were depressed from their process. **They felt cheated** at not being able to go through the strategic visioning process. We then explained the strategic visioning process to them, although we didn't have time to take them through it due to a tight schedule. They still felt cheated, and told us so on the evaluation sheets at the end of the three day program.

Why did the one group, randomly chosen, become so beat down by the problem-solving process? And **why did they become angry** at us for what was **merely an exercise**? Why did the other group, also randomly chosen, become so excited about a strategic vision and action plan for a **mythical** community? We didn't know then. **Now we know**.

Harnessing the Power

The Power of Vision

Several authors and researchers (see references in back) have documented that vision has a particular power – a power that is grounded in its ability to move us toward the future in a profound way. This power of vision, which can be harnessed in your community, comes from five of its characteristics. Vision:

1) **comes from the heart**, and is therefore personal and passionate.
2) **expresses our deepest values** – those qualities to which we are loyal.
3) **describes what we offer to each other and to the world**.
4) **leaps over present constraints** to a desired future, and creates a strong desire to break through those constraints.
5) **provides meaning in our lives** by describing who we are and what we want to become – a personal portrayal of our desired future.

Fred Pollack (#17 in the references) in his studies of nations large and small, rich and poor, discovered that **significant vision preceded significant action**; that nations became great not because they had tremendous resources, a large population, or a strategic advantage. What they had was a clear and profound vision of their desired future. The vision caused them to transcend their current limitations and to realize that future.

A Story From The Middle Ages

Three stone masons in the middle ages were hard at work when a visitor came along and asked them what they were doing. The first stone mason was hard at work, sweat beading his brow. "I am cutting this stone," he grumbled. The second stone mason, though less distraught, responded with a deep sigh, "I'm building a parapet." The third stone mason, replied with a radiant face, "I am building a beautiful cathedral that will glorify God for centuries to come."

Author Unknown

The third stone mason understood the grand vision for the cathedral, and the vision provided meaning to his life. Like the first two stone masons, the group of educators who felt anger were focused on the toil and drudgery of cutting one stone after another. Their creative energy was sapped by the realization that there will **always be more problems than they can solve**. They had a vision, but it was a vision of drudgery, absent of hope. In contrast, the other group was like the third stone mason – inspired by a vision that was compelling and worthwhile.

A strategic vision is a compelling mental image of your desired future. It describes a credible, attractive future in a given endeavor – our personal life, family, business, or community. Strategic visions must be both **strategic** and **lofty**; strategic because they anchor our plans and actions in the context of our specific environment, and lofty because that is what is needed to inspire commitment and action. Strategic visions should stretch us beyond our current state but cannot be pie-in-the-sky, which is merely an illusion.

Helpful Reference

For excellent examples of vision statements, refer to Appendix B: Sample Vision Statements.

Strategic Thinking, Planning, and Visioning

In Greek, the word strategy means "the art of the general." The Greeks believed that generals had an overview of the entire battle, while the rank and file had a limited perspective.

Larry and Hersch Wilson

Strategic thinking takes place when you think hard and clearly about your particular setting and your anticipated future:

- your community's unique strengths, weaknesses, capabilities, and potentials;
- the forces and trends in your region, the nation, and the world that impinge on your community; and
- how you can take advantage of your unique position in the world through selected and focused efforts.

Strategic planning applies strategic thinking to a systematic process of planning for the future, anticipating changes in the environment and setting out appropriate goals and action steps. Some strategic planning processes are limited by merely extending the present into the future, by focusing on problems, or by limiting plans to current resources.

Strategic visioning is a strategic planning process that includes a compelling description of your desired future (a vision), and generates a plan and resources to realize this vision. Ultimately, strategic visioning leads to the deployment of resources in focused development (or preservation) efforts.

Chris Carlson (5) describes the power of a strategic vision:

> **Strategic Vision defines a purpose of the organization which is clearly beyond its logical means. It defines ends to which the purpose of the organization will deliver it, but purposefully deletes the means, forcing creative and outward focused solutions into all parts of the organization.**

Carlson also compares the difference between traditional planning and strategic visioning as the difference between driving a car and flying a helicopter. The driver of the car is limited to the horizontal plane, while the helicopter pilot can move in all three dimensions.

> **NOTE**: Many cities have developed comprehensive plans. The term comprehensive plan refers to a land use plan for the city that often includes subdivision regulations and a plan for capital improvements by city government. In contrast, strategic visioning processes encompass the entire community (including the business, government, and non-profit sectors), describe a desired future for the community, and an action plan of how to achieve that desired future. A strategic vision and action plan may call for the development of or updating a comprehensive plan.

Six Elements of a Good Vision

Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans, aim high in hope and work. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us.

Daniel Hudson Burnham
American architect who designed Union Station, Washington, D.C.

Good visions:

1) **Describe how our community serves its citizens, its visitors, and the world**. Our future depends on your ability to serve each other, to serve visitors, and to serve the world. We must understand what we contribute, and communicate it to the world.

2) **Are inspiring, compelling, and bold; raising our expectations and our actions to achieve a higher purpose**. They capture our imagination, challenge our minds, and engage our spirits. As indicated on the left, Daniel Hudson Burnham's exhortation to the men of his day has a lesson for all of us.

3) **Embody our deepest values and give us courage to express those values in our community**. Visions connect with people in a way that resonates with their own deepest feelings about what is right and worth doing. They reflect a deep understanding of our collective yearnings – what we want, what we value, and what we dream about. They express how we feel about what really matters.

4) **Are strategic – distinguishing our particular community from the world**. Strategic visions focus on our strategic advantages, building on our unique past, the realities of the present, and our potentials for the future. Strategic visions are a source of pride because they express how we are truly distinctive.

Quiz – Which of These Statements is a Strategic Vision?

A wonderful small city with friendly neighbors, good schools, and outdoor recreation.

Crown Jewel of the Ozarks – a small college town with a high quality of life, a vital and diversified economy, and recreational opportunities in the nearby Ozark National Forest.

5) **Use vivid language, word pictures, and metaphors to communicate enthusiasm and excitement.**

EXAMPLE: Our community is embarking on a grand journey – a journey to the 21st Century. The journey will bring us face-to-face with many unknowns; it will test our abilities to cooperate, to pool our wisdom, and to meet great challenges. The choices we make as we take this incredibly important journey will be visited upon our children and our grandchildren, affecting the quality of their lives, the range of their opportunities, and the availability of resources to them. Consequently, we venture forth on this journey in a way that will make all future generations proud.

A vision is like a lighthouse, which illuminates rather than limits, giving direction rather than destination.

James J. Mapes
Foresight First

6) **Are specific, concise, and brief.** Strategic visions empower leaders to say yes to some opportunities, and no to others that conflict with the vision. They describe our desired future with enough detail that everyone knows their important and significant role in the vision. Strategic visions are also fairly short (a paragraph or less), and easy to read.

NOTE: If you cannot remember the vision or a shorthand version of it, it is not likely to accomplish its intended purpose – to unify and mobilize the community to create its desired future.

Peter Block (4) gives these tips to creating what he calls a vision of greatness: forget about being number one (the vision should be worth pursuing for its own sake), don't be practical (being practical too quickly interferes with creating a vision of your desired future), begin with your customers (internal and external) and their needs, and finally, if your vision statement sounds like motherhood and apple pie and is somewhat embarrassing, you are on the right track.

Helpful Reference

To evaluate your vision statement, refer to Appendix C: A Brief Test for Your Vision Statement.

The Vision Community Is an Empowered Community

The power of vision can be harnessed in your community, but it requires specific strategies for involvement. Joel Barker, in his videotape *The Power of Vision* (2) says that when a vision is **shared and supported**, "you then have a vision community." Strategic visioning fosters leadership of the entire community. Rather than leadership **in the community**, such as leadership within a particular organization, citizens see how their personal interests relate to the other parts of the community and depend on mutual cooperation and community support.

Creating a strategic vision for your community is a powerful mechanism for **empowering your community** – of **bringing together** various factions, groups, and individuals; **aligning them** with a shared vision, and **unleashing their energies** to work toward a common end. It is common sense, but very true, that **people value those things which they help create**.

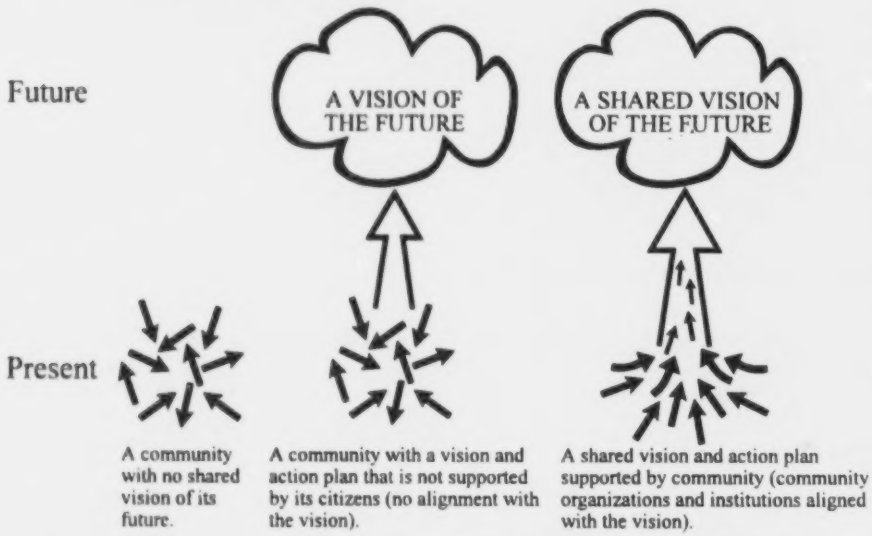
Consequently, the more broad-based involvement there is up front in the strategic visioning process, the more likelihood of success in bringing that vision into reality. **A good vision is owned by the community**.

Organizations, which include private companies, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and institutions, each have:

- a collection of resources (human, financial, technological, physical, and informational),
- an agenda,
- a vision of their desired future (written or unwritten),
- a leadership structure (formal or informal),
- a set of allegiances to that agenda and to that leadership, and
- the potential to be a partner in development efforts in the community.

The potential impact of these organizations being aligned into a common vision and action plan is portrayed in the following figure:

Figure 1. Three Community Scenarios


Future
A VISION OF THE FUTURE
A SHARED VISION OF THE FUTURE
Present
A community with no shared vision of its future.
A community with a vision and action plan that is not supported by its citizens (no alignment with the vision).
A shared vision and action plan supported by community (community organizations and institutions aligned with the vision).

It takes an orchestra to play a symphony.

Think of the future of your community as **a large symphony orchestra**, with each citizen in your community having a musical instrument to play. The orchestra is now preparing – practicing – for a major concert in the future with the outside world as your audience. If there is a common vision – **a strategic vision** that is shared and supported by the entire community, the concert will be a beautiful, uplifting experience, with each person contributing their part to create a powerful effect on the audience and the performers. If the vision is not shared and supported, or if there are conflicting visions (song sheets), the result will be a chaotic collision of notes and songs that compete with each other and create a dissonance among the performers and with the audience.

The keys to mobilizing the community are involvement and commitment. Involve leaders (those individuals willing to take responsibility) from the different sectors shown in the community sector wheel, and gain their commitment to participate in the process. In addition, seek representation that covers differences of race, gender, race, ethnicity, length of residence, and location within your community.

Figure 2. Community Sector Wheel

In the final analysis, the power of community action is the power to act in concert with others.

David Matthews
The Kettering Foundation

Understanding the **differing abilities of individuals to get things done** is very helpful in gaining commitment from the community. The community effectiveness chart below ranks individuals by their ability to get things done (or keep things from getting done), and is useful in seeking that commitment.

Figure 3. Community Effectiveness Chart

Power Elites traditionally have been wealthy individuals, usually natives, who are influential in a wide variety of issues and well connected politically at local, state, and even national levels.

Key Influentials are individuals who are well respected, often holding positions where they can make important decisions in organizations in particular sectors of the community.

Active Citizens take part in the everyday work of the community, participate in one or more organizations, and know how to get things done.

The Concerned Public knows what is going on in the community and becomes involved when an issue arises with which it has a particular interest.

The General Public is less aware of what is taking place in the public arena but becomes involved when it perceives a real threat or opportunity within the community.

Key points to consider:

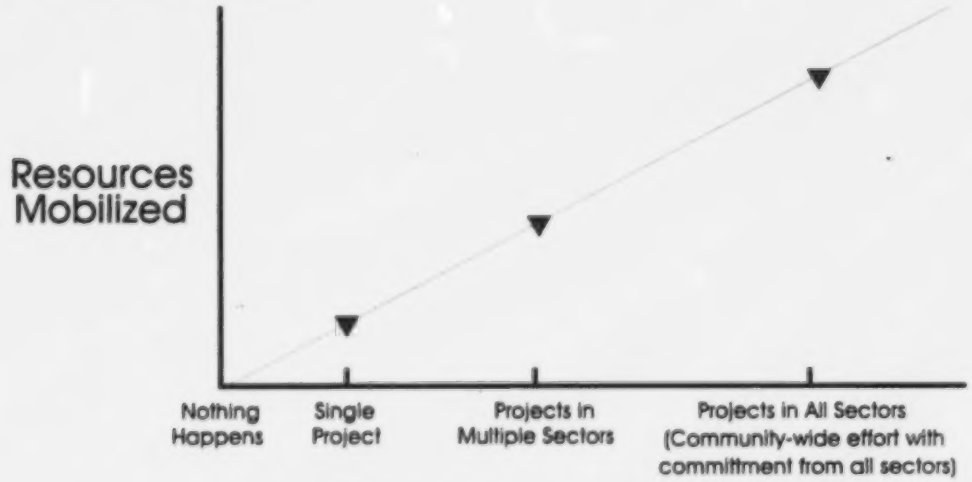
We have all been gifted with power to make a difference.

Meg Yoak
1990 CDS Annual
Meeting

- Everyone can learn how to get things done in the community.
- All of these groups are important, have resources, and can contribute to (or kill) a community's strategic visioning process.
- All need to be informed and involved (or at least invited) somewhere in the process.
- You may need different strategies to involve different groups.
- Personal one-to-one visits may be most effective with power elites, while mass media and flyers are appropriate for the general public.
- If you do not involve key influentials in this process, you are unlikely to gain the support of those sectors.
- When people come together to describe their desired future, they discover what they share in common, in spite of their differences.

Although **each of these groups has power in the community**, none of them can compete with a community that has initiated a strategic visioning process with the support and involvement of these groups across the sectors of the community. This can truly empower your community and mobilize its resources, as indicated in the chart below.

Figure 4. Community Resource Mobilization Chart


Resources Mobilized
Nothing Happens
Single Project
Projects in Multiple Sectors
Projects in All Sectors (Community-wide effort with committment from all sectors)

NOTE: Although there are many advantages to developing a strategic vision and action plan for the whole community, **some communities feel more comfortable beginning by addressing a single issue**, thus developing confidence and trust within the community before moving on to a more comprehensive process. Projects that involve many people and organizations and lead to positive results are particularly useful for this purpose and include community cleanup days and park development projects.

What Strategic Visions Are Not

1) Strategic visions are not mission statements.

A mission statement is a **broad, general statement of purpose** – the purpose of an organization or a business. It specifies the organization's reason for existence and establishes the scope of the organization's activities. Missions can usually be stated in a sentence or two and can often be stated as a slogan. If the mission is too long to remember, it is not very useful. A mission statement serves very useful purposes, but is different from a vision statement.

An **organization** should have a mission statement, as well as a vision statement, which is a compelling mental image of its desired future. The mission describes that portion of the vision that the organization seeks to realize. As communities have multiple purposes and multiple dimensions, vision statements are more useful for communities than mission statements.

Case Study from Northwest Montgomery County, AR

Mission Statement: The mission of the Ouachita River Valley Partners for Progress is to enhance the quality of life and preserve the scenic beauty of the Ouachita River Valley.

This mission statement describes the basic purpose of the Ouachita River Valley Partners for Progress. George Barna (3) states that a vision statement "puts feet" on the mission and describes a desired future which serves as a beacon for guiding development efforts of the community.

A plan, which usually contains goals, strategies, and projects, tells us how to get there. A strategic vision tells us where "there" is – what the community wants to become.

2) Strategic visions are not plans.

A plan, which usually contains goals, strategies, and projects, tells us how to get there. A strategic vision tells us where "there" is – what the community wants to become.

3) Strategic visions do not identify issues and specific projects that can divide the community.

If the strategic vision says that there will be planning and zoning and a natural historic district, people will begin discussing and arguing over these issues, and not support the entire strategic visioning effort. However, if the vision statement describes "a vital economy in harmony with the environment, preserving our heritage, culture, and buildings", local citizens are more likely to join in, seeking ways to make this vision a reality. It should draw people together because it **expresses who they are and what they want their community to become**.

4) Strategic visions are not projections of the present, nor are they estimates of the likely future given present trends and constraints.

Projections of the present assume no active intervention from the community other than what is currently taking place. Strategic visioning actually alters the present trends and constraints.

5) Strategic visions are not mechanisms to eliminate risk.

They are, however, **mechanisms to reduce risk**, particularly the risk of inheriting an undesired future. An undesired future can be the result of external forces having their sway over a community and/or internal dissension dissipating energy and prohibiting a common direction.

TEN STEPS – AN OVERALL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Introduction to the Ten Steps

This publication describes an overall community development process (a process of community involvement) with a strategic visioning component. In the field of community development, communities use a variety of development approaches. **Strategic visioning has unique advantages** in its ability to engage the community in visualizing its desired future and working to bring about that future.

This process is quite flexible; it can be used to address a single issue, an entire community, or a larger area. You can also spend a great deal of time doing research for each step of the process, or you can move through it more quickly, relying solely on the expertise and experience of your particular group.

The purpose of strategic visioning is to shape the future.

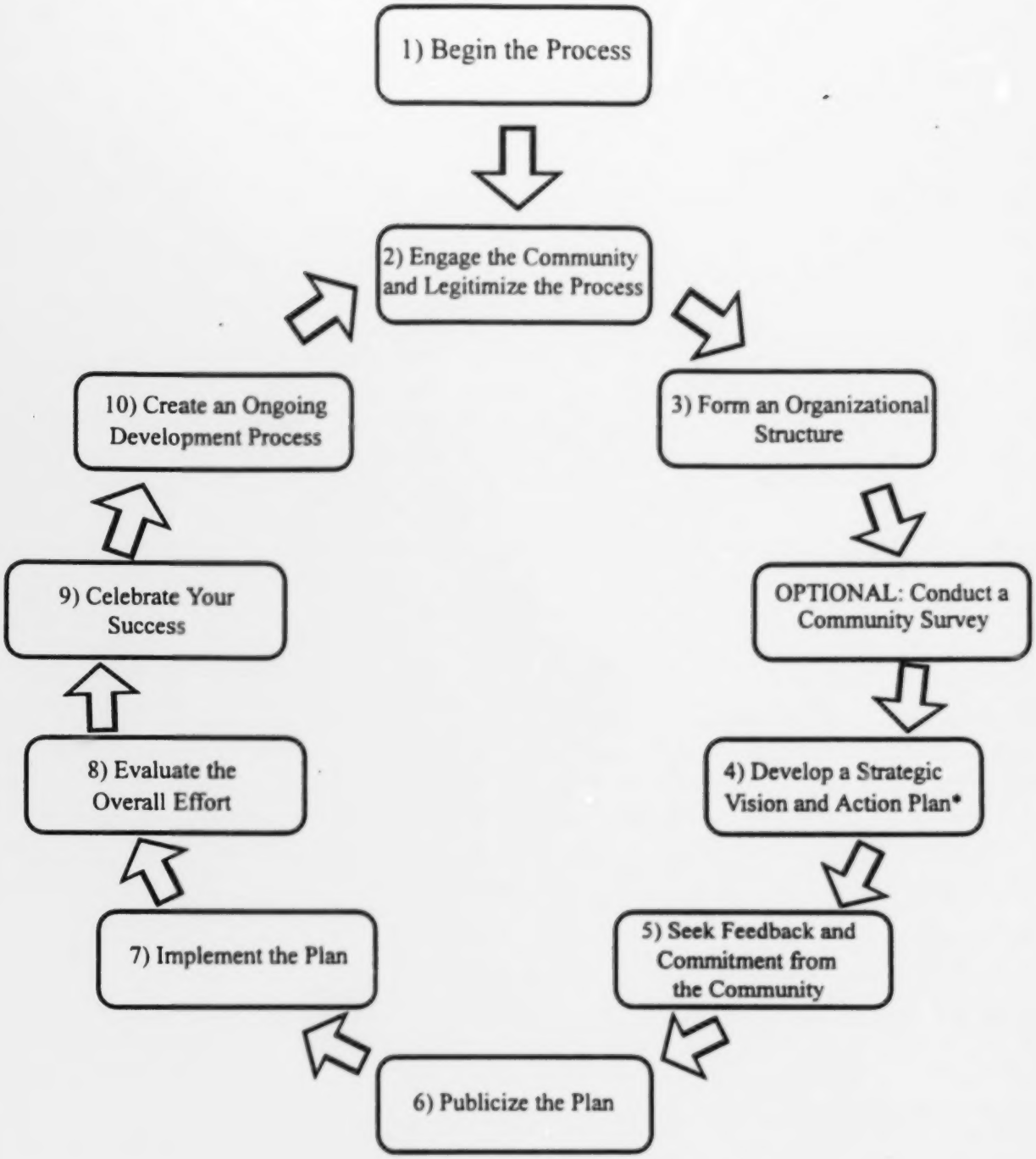
The Ten Step Community Development Process is portrayed below, in Figure 5 on the next page, and described in the Overview on page 14. For more explanation, refer to the Commentary, Case Studies, and War Stories that follow.

The identification of benchmark indicators is an optional feature of this process. If you are tempted to skip this step, you might select just a few simple benchmarks rather than none at all. When you begin to use them, you will find they add a **powerful tool** to your development process.

The Ten Step Community Development Process:

1) Begin the process (Initial Meeting).
2) Engage the community and legitimize the process (Stakeholder Meeting).
3) Form an organizational structure (Organization and Planning Meeting).

Figure 5. Ten Step Community Development Process


1) Begin the Process
2) Engage the Community and Legitimize the Process
3) Form an Organizational Structure
OPTIONAL: Conduct a Community Survey
4) Develop a Strategic Vision and Action Plan*
5) Seek Feedback and Commitment from the Community
6) Publicize the Plan
7) Implement the Plan
8) Evaluate the Overall Effort
9) Celebrate Your Success
10) Create an Ongoing Development Process

* The strategic visioning component of this overall community development process, Step 4, addresses these questions:

- Where have you been?
- Where are you now?
- Where do you want to go?
- How will you get there?
- How will you know when you are there? (OPTIONAL)

4) Develop a strategic vision and action plan (three Strategic Visioning Meetings).
5) Seek feedback and commitment from the community.
6) Publicize the plan.
7) Implement the plan.
8) Evaluate the overall effort.
9) Celebrate your success.
10) Create an ongoing development process.

Helpful Reference

For useful guidelines to ensure that your process is effective, refer to Appendix D: Twelve Keys to a Successful Strategic Visioning and Action Process.

TEN STEP PROCESS – AN OVERVIEW

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.

Henry Ford

STEP 1: Begin the Process. (Initial Meeting)

Who Needs to be Involved
A small group of key leaders who care about your community.

Tasks to Accomplish
Become familiar with the overall process.
Discuss your community and identify reasons for action.
Form a nucleus group committed to proceed.
Define your community.
Identify **key leaders and stakeholders** (those individuals, organizations, companies, and institutions that have a major stake in your community and can make a difference).
Plan a stakeholder meeting.

Before the Next Meeting
Make arrangements for the stakeholder meeting.
Invite key stakeholders to the meeting.

STEP 2: Engage the Community and Legitimize the Process. (Stakeholder Meeting)

Who Needs to be Involved
Nucleus group
Key leaders from all sectors of the community

Tasks to Accomplish
Present the overall process and discuss reasons for action. (Use charts and data if this would be helpful).
Determine if the leadership of the community is willing to commit to this effort.

Before the Next Meeting
Seek endorsements from local government bodies and other organizations.
Identify individuals who would be willing to participate.
Publicize the organization and planning meeting.

When facing a difficult task, act as if it is impossible to fail. When going after Moby Dick, bring along the tartar sauce.

Author Unknown

STEP 3: Form an Organizational Structure. (Organization and Planning Meeting)

Who Needs to be Involved
Nucleus group
Committed leaders from all sectors of the community

Tasks to Accomplish
Define the mission of the organization.
Identify core values that will serve as the basis for this effort.
Develop an appropriate organizational structure to implement the community development process, with representation from all sectors of the community.
Become familiar with the process and agree on a time table for action.
Plan the three strategic visioning meetings.

Before the Next Meeting
Make arrangements for three strategic visioning meetings.
Publicize the strategic visioning meetings.

OPTIONAL: Conduct a Community Survey. (Time required depends on size of community and scope of survey)

Who Needs to be Involved
Community Development Organization
Banks, utilities, schools, and other groups that can assist with the survey.

Tasks to Accomplish
Reach out to the entire community with a brief survey, or conduct focus group sessions with special groups.
Ask the community to identify what has the greatest potential to move the community forward, what is holding the community back, and what they would like to see in the future.
Publicize the results.
Tell the truth.

STEP 4: Develop a Strategic Vision and Action Plan. (Three Strategic Visioning Meetings)

Who Needs to be Involved
Community Development Organization
Broad cross-section of citizens and leaders from throughout your community.

Tasks to Accomplish
Conduct three community meetings to address these questions:
– Where have we been?
– Where are we now?
– Where do we want to go?
– How will we get there?
– How will we know when we are there? (OPTIONAL)

Form and train Action Teams to develop and implement the strategic vision and action plan.

NOTE: The following steps are not described as taking place in particular meetings, but become a part of an ongoing development process.

STEP 5: Seek Feedback and Commitment from the Community.

Who Needs to be Involved
Community Development Organization (which includes the Action Teams)
Organizations, companies, agencies, and institutions
The public

Tasks to Accomplish
Share proposed vision and action plan widely.
Seek honest feedback and adjust vision and action plan accordingly.
Get organizations, agencies, companies, and institutions to commit to the strategic vision and action plan.

STEP 6: Publicize the Plan.

Who Needs to be Involved
Community Development Organization

Tasks to Accomplish
Share copies with all interested organizations and individuals.
Weave the strategic vision and action plan into the fabric of your community.
Create a visual display in a prominent public place of the vision and action plan.

STEP 7: Implement the Plan.

Who Needs to be Involved
Community Development Organization
Broad group of stakeholders in the community

Tasks to Accomplish
Organizations and Action Teams take action, utilizing resources from within and outside of the community.
Sustain the momentum – nurture, recognize, and communicate.
Be open to emerging issues and concerns that may arise, and form Action Teams to address those issues and concerns.

When the age of the Vikings came to a close, they probably gathered together one evening, slapped each other on the back, and said, "Hey, good job."

Jack Handey
Saturday Night Live

STEP 8: Evaluate the Overall Effort.

Who Needs to be Involved
Community Development Organization
Broad group of stakeholders in the community

Tasks to Accomplish
Come together to address these questions:
– Did we accomplish our goals?
– What was the impact of these actions?
– What did we learn from this experience?
– Where do we need to go from here?

STEP 9: Celebrate Your Success.

Who Needs to be Involved
Community Development Organization
The entire community, including all generations

Tasks to Accomplish
Recognize everyone who was involved.
Strengthen the sense of community.
Come to closure on major projects.

STEP 10: Create an Ongoing Development Process.

Who Needs to be Involved
Community Development Organization
Broad group of stakeholders in the community

Tasks to Accomplish
Take a fresh look at the strategic vision and action plan.
Reach out to new leaders.
Institutionalize the process through volunteer or paid staff and other mechanisms.
Develop long-term funding.
Sustain the momentum and commit for the long term.

TEN STEP PROCESS – COMMENTARY, CASE STUDIES, AND WAR STORIES

STEP 1: Begin the Process. (Initial Meeting)

Who Needs to be Involved

a) A small group of key leaders who care about your community.
- Seek out creative leaders who are capable of creating excitement.

Not much happens without a dream. And for something great to happen, there must be a great dream. Much more than a dreamer is required to bring it to reality, but the dream must be there first.

Robert K. Greenleaf
The Servant as Leader

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Become familiar with the overall process.

b) Discuss your community and identify reasons for action:
- Review the history of planning in your community, critical issues facing your community, available resources, and your community's readiness to go through a strategic visioning process.
- You may want to compare your community with surrounding counties or the state average on a variety of indicators such as population growth, unemployment, and education.
- Identify those issues that will mobilize your community to work together.

c) Form a nucleus group committed to proceed:
- Realize that the future begins now, and that if you don't bring your community together to plan for the future, a great opportunity may be lost.

d) Define your community:
- Consider the merits to defining your community be city limits, trade area, school district, county, or multi-county area.

– Choose the definition that will enable you to address the issues confronting your community. If you want to deal with educational issues, for example, the school district would be a logical boundary.
–The area you choose should be an area with which people feel a connectedness – a sense of community.

e) Identify key leaders and stakeholders (those individuals, organizations, companies, and institutions that have a major stake in your community and can make a difference):
– Seek out influential leaders in each sector of the community (see the sector wheel in "The Vision Community" section), as well as representatives of civic clubs, minorities, women, youth, the elderly newcomers, and those from different geographic parts of your community.
– Identify the **motivators** in your community – those individuals who have a passion and ability to motivate others to become involved.
– You are seeking to identify individuals who can become **champions of the vision** in each sector who will carry the ball and make it happen in that sector of the community.

Case Study – Involving Youth in the Process

In 1994, the Northern Berkshire Health and Human Services Coalition of North Adams, Massachusetts, sponsored a community-dream contest for local youth. The contest was held in conjunction with Martin Luther King's birthday with the theme "I have a dream." Two hundred and fifty essays and poems were submitted.

Callahan Outdoor Advertising donated seven billboards to display dreams on Route 2, one a month through December. In addition, more than 50 other entries – poems, essays, and drawings – were collected into a *Book of Dreams*, printed in part by the local newspaper, and then published by the Coalition. This is a great example of involving youth in describing your desired future.

Community Partners, Amherst, MA

The reason that astronomers around the world cooperate so well together is that you cannot stand in one place and see the entire sky. We can apply this same principle to communities.

f) Plan a stakeholder meeting.
– A stakeholder breakfast is one way to accomplish this without taking a great deal of time.
– You may decide to meet personally with some leaders in your community prior to the stakeholder meeting, to garner their support.
– Emphasize that this process builds on the past, brings together current organizational efforts, and addresses the most important issues facing the community and its future. It should complement and support existing organizations and their activities.
– Be willing to consider tackling real problems in the community now; it can build your credibility and develop support within the community.

Before the Next Meeting

a) Make arrangements for the stakeholder meeting.

b) Invite key stakeholders to the meeting.

Collaboration comes from the heart. It happens when you want it to happen.

Randy Williams
Cooperative State
Research, Education,
and Extension Service

STEP 2: Engage the Community and Legitimize the Process. (Stakeholder Meeting)

Who Needs to be Involved

a) Nucleus group

b) Key leaders from all sectors of the community

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Present the overall process and discuss reasons for action. (Use charts and data if this would be helpful).
- Ask the participants to identify the changes that have taken place in your community in the last 20 to 30 years, and discuss these changes.
- Present charts, graphs, and data if this would be helpful.
- Discuss these changes, including what the community be like in ten years if you do not take action now.
- You may also show them "The Power of Vision" videotape, which describes the power of vision through powerful imagery and compelling examples. (Contact your county Cooperative Extension Service Office to access this video).

b) Determine if the leadership of the community is willing to commit to this effort.
- Commitment is necessary for the effort to be successful.
- A community needs a core group of leaders from across the community who are committed to seeing this through at least an 18 month process, as well as in-kind support to handle all logistics. This is your VISION TEAM.

Case Study – A Strategic Visioning Process That Didn't Get Off the Ground

All the ingredients were there – a rural community in Arkansas with real problems and untapped potential, a group of committed citizens who expressed interest in improving their community, and technical assistance. And yet, the process never really took off, and interest gradually dwindled. Why wasn't this community successful, when so many others are accomplishing great things? Several factors contributed to this situation:

- The citizens group wanted to do something, but ultimately there was not a core group that was willing to devote the time and energy to make it happen.
- The technical specialist failed to adequately convey the time and effort that would be required for a strategic visioning process for the community.
- The citizens group was unsuccessful at communicating the real need and potential of the strategic visioning process to power elites and key influentials in the community, resulting in important sectors not buying in to the process.
- The process used did not generate action soon enough to sustain interest by the participants.

NOTE: Although there are many advantages to developing a strategic vision and action plan for the whole community, some groups feel more comfortable beginning by addressing a single issue, thus developing the confidence and trust within the community before moving on to a more comprehensive process.

Before the Next Meeting

a) Identify individuals who would be willing to participate.

b) Publicize the organization and planning meeting.

c) Seek endorsements from local government bodies and other organizations.
- You don't merely want their endorsement; you want their involvement.
- A formal written resolution is best because it formalizes the commitment.

Helpful Reference

For examples of written resolutions, refer to Appendix E: Written Agreements of Commitment.

Organizations are vehicles for development, and an organization's leadership is at the steering wheel.

STEP 3: Form an organizational structure. (Organization and Planning Meeting)

Who Needs to be Involved

a) Nucleus group

b) Committed leaders from all sectors of the community

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Define the mission of the organization.
- A mission statement specifies the organization's purpose, establishes the scope of the organization's activities, and provides overall direction for the organization.

Case Study – Mission Statement of the Booneville Development Corporation, Booneville, AR

The mission of the Booneville Development Corporation is to involve the leaders and citizens of Booneville and South Logan County in a process of creating and implementing a strategic vision and action plan that will serve as a blueprint for us to work together to create our desired future – a strong local economy and a high quality of life.

b) Identify core values that will serve as the basis for this effort.
- Core values express what is important to us and help ensure that we are all of one accord as we reach out to involve the community in planning for its future.

Core values, because they anchor our thoughts and actions in those things which do not change, free us to dream about the changes we would like to see take place in our community.

Example Core Values:

* Focus on the big picture – we will focus on the future of our community and what it can be for all of us and our children.
* Personal respect – we will respect all individuals, their right to their own opinions, and their right to disagree.
* Inclusiveness – we seek to include all segments of the community.
* Excitement – we want to build excitement and enthusiasm for our community and this effort.

c) Develop an appropriate organizational structure to implement the community development process, with representation from all sectors of the community.

NOTE: You may choose a simple coordinating group or a more formal organizational structure, but you will need some sort of **ongoing development group** with representation from several organizations to be **keepers of the vision** and **act as a catalyst** for forming and implementing the strategic vision and action plan. Communities often begin with simple organizational structures, with the option of forming non-profit corporations later.

- Develop a name for your organization that is descriptive and bold.
- Decide on what officers you want (typically a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer).
- Some groups select co-chairperson, each having the respect of different parts of the community (black/white, oldtimer/newcomer, etc.).
- Decide whether you want a board of directors, an executive committee of officers only, or both.
- Invite the public to be involved before you select your leaders.
- Give thought to who you want to be the leaders; choose people with leadership ability who are respected in the community. (Some individuals have **convening power** – when they call others together, **they come**).
- Identify a primary contact person for outside resource people.

Case Study – Governance by the Membership (Partnership for a Better Perry County)

With funding through a grant from the U.S. Forest Service's Rural Community Assistance Program, and widespread involvement by the local people, community leaders in Perry County, Arkansas, developed a strategic vision and action plan for the year 2000 for their county. They then developed a simple but effective organization with the following elements:

- individual membership open to anyone who pays dues,
- offices of chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer elected by the membership,
- action teams (formed to address natural resources and tourism, community and economic development, health and safety, and education) which meet every other month;
- broad-based membership; with members coming from all over the county and representing business, industry, health care, banking, and local, state, and federal governments; and
- overall group meetings held every other month to hear reports from action teams and to coordinate overall efforts.

Case Study – Governance by a Representative Board of Directors (Booneville Development Corporation)

When leaders of Booneville and south Logan County, Arkansas came together to form a community development organization, they wanted to insure that different parts of the community were represented and could take part in the discussions and decisionmaking. They created the Booneville Development Corporation (BDC), with the following elements:

- membership open to all interested individuals, with dues for individuals and businesses. An annual membership meeting is held to inform the members of accomplishments and garner input for the coming year.
- a board of directors of 24 individuals with representatives from health, education, retail, manufacturing, agriculture, banking, local government, and the clergy. The board is elected by the membership and meets quarterly.
- an executive committee of 8 board members (president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer plus four additional individuals), elected by the board. The executive committee meets monthly.
- committees to address health, education, leadership development, strategic planning, housing, child care, youth, industrial development, and a lake project. Committees meet monthly or as needed.
- overall meetings are held monthly to hear committee reports and continue the work of the organization.
- an executive director and executive assistant were hired to coordinate these efforts on an ongoing basis and communicate with the membership and public through a bi-monthly newsletter and other media.
- a status of 501(c)6 with the Internal Revenue Service to reduce liability. The BDC is now forming a foundation to be able to receive tax-free donations for development purposes.

It's amazing how much you can get done when you don't care who gets the credit.

Richard Hettrick
Independence
Neighborhood Councils
Independence, MO

d) Become familiar with the process and agree on a time table for action.
- Map out the steps needed to develop the strategic vision and action plan and carry it through to implementation.
- Gain commitments of who will do what, when, and where.

e) Plan the three strategic visioning meetings.

NOTE: The strategic visioning component is described in more detail later in this publication.

Before the Next Meeting

a) Make arrangements for three strategic visioning meetings.
- Plan them at a time and place that will maximize the number of people who can attend.
- You may begin with temporary chairpersons for each key issue such as economic development, education, and quality of life.
- As Action Teams are formed for each key issue, they can then select their own leadership once they are organized.

– Consider enhancing this event by serving a meal, involving various groups in the preparation of a meal, decorating the meeting place, providing some entertainment, and inviting a well known elected official to come and kick off the event. Don't be afraid to start with a bang – banners, bands, and balloons.

b) Publicize the strategic visioning meetings.
- Publicize the meeting widely through several media – newspapers, radio, fliers, posters, and other kinds of communication.
- You may want to develop a simple brochure or flier to explain what this is all about.

OPTIONAL: Conduct a Community Survey. (Time required depends on size of community and scope of survey)

Who Needs to be Involved

a) Community Development Organization

b) Banks, utilities, schools, and other groups that can assist with the survey.

Tasks to Accomplish

The power of communication begins with the art of listening, and community surveys are a great way to listen.

a) Reach out to the entire community with a brief survey, or conduct focus group sessions with special groups.
- You are seeking to find out what people are really concerned about, and stimulate their involvement in this process.
- Ask visitors what they think of your community with a simple survey.
- Ask your high school juniors and seniors what they think of your community, and what they plan to do when they complete school.
- Ask your major employers what they think of your community and what suggestions they have for its improvement.

b) Ask the community to identify what has the greatest potential to move the community forward, what is holding the community back, and what they would like to see in the future.

c) Publicize the results.
- The first community meeting to kick off the strategic visioning process would be a good time to share the survey results.

d) Tell the truth.
- Your credibility depends on your ability to address important issues in a balanced manner, even if the survey results are not flattering to particular individuals.

STEP 4: Develop a Strategic Vision and Action Plan. (Three Strategic Visioning Meetings)

Who Needs to be Involved

a) Community Development Organization

b) Broad cross-section of citizens and leaders from throughout your community.

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Conduct three community meetings to address these questions:
- Where have we been?
- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to go?
- How will we get there?
- How will we know when we are there? OPTIONAL

b) Form and train action teams to develop and implement the strategic vision and action plan.
- Be sure to capture the results from the meeting and share it back with the action teams.
- This process of capturing, processing, and feeding information back to the group is not merely important; it is critical.

NOTE: This strategic visioning component is described in more detail in the next section of this publication.

Case Study – Forming Action Teams

In VISION 20/20, a broad-based strategic planning effort in Springfield and Greene County, Missouri, 11 topics were identified as critical to the future of the area. Focus groups of 20 to 30 people were established to address each of these topics. Half the members of each group were selected for their expertise. The other half was selected from citizens who completed a simple application form expressing their willingness to serve on a focus group for a 12-18 month period of time.

All the historic evidence indicates that significant community development only takes place when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort. That is why you can't develop communities from the top down, or from the outside in.

John L. McKnight
and John Kretzmann
Mapping Community
Capacity

NOTE: The following steps are not described as taking place in particular meetings, but become a part of an ongoing development process.

STEP 5: Seek Feedback and Commitment from the Community.

Who Needs to be Involved

a) Community Development Organization (which includes the Action Teams)
b) Organizations, companies, agencies, and institutions
c) The public

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Share proposed vision and action plan widely.
- The proposed strategic vision and action plan will become more focused, effective, and in tune with the aspirations of the community through feedback, so seek it out.
- A series of articles in the newspaper and radio interviews can be effective ways to begin to communicate the essence of the plan to the public.
- Send copies to key stakeholders for their feedback, and make copies available to anyone who is interested.
- You may also choose to make presentations on the strategic vision and action plan before groups in your community.

- Every community does a lot of things right; be sure to include up front what you are proud of in your community (from the community meeting or survey).
- Publish the proposed strategic vision and action plan in the newspaper, and invite the public to comment on it.

b) Seek honest feedback and adjust vision and action plan accordingly.
- Some communities ask the public to vote for or against their strategic vision and action plan. This provides a measure of how well the proposed plan represents the desires and aspirations of the community.
- You are seeking to develop a plan that reflects the aspirations and desires of the citizens of your community.
- Respond to their wishes today and they will listen to you tomorrow.

You are seeking the alignment of organizations – their agendas, their resources, and their actions – to an overall vision for the future which they help develop.

c) Get organizations, agencies, companies, and institutions to commit to the strategic vision and action plan.
- You are seeking the alignment of organizations – their agendas, their resources, and their actions – to an overall vision for the future which they helped develop.
- You seek commitment of organizations to take responsibility for implementing those parts of the plan they choose. This will leave some issues that new action teams will need to address.

STEP 6: Publicize the Plan.

Who Needs to be Involved

a) Community Development Organization

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Share copies with all interested organizations and individuals.
- You have a blueprint for the future of your community, and you need to get that blueprint into the hands of those who are building the future – the citizens and organizations in your community.
- You might also develop a brochure that outlines the highlights of the vision and action plan for the public.
- A theme or slogan that expresses the essence of your vision can be very compelling.

Helpful Reference

For information on themes and slogans, refer to Appendix F: Themes, Slogans, Mottos, and Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals.

b) Weave the strategic vision and action plan into the fabric of your community.
- Make the vision and action plan the reference to which people turn when they are involved in their own organizations.

c) Create a visual display in a prominent public place of the vision and action plan.
- Portray the vision, the action plan, the implementation time line, and who is responsible on a large chart.
- Utilize art and graphics to create a stimulating portrayal of your community's future.

Case Study – The Power of a Visual Image

Rock Hill, South Carolina, a small city living in the shadow of the Charlotte, North Carolina metro area, commissioned an artist's painting that depicted Rock Hill as a wonderful small city with easy access to big city amenities. This compelling vision, along with a strategic action plan and support by leaders from across the community, has served as a powerful catalyst for rejuvenation of the community.

*I believe in **action**. In this world, it is not what you know that matters. Rather, it's what you do with what you know that counts. Information is valuable – action is invaluable.*

James A. Balasco
Teaching the Elephant to Dance

STEP 7: Implement the Plan.

Who Needs to be Involved

a) Community Development Organization

b) Broad group of stakeholders in the community

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Organizations and Action Teams take action, utilizing resources from within and outside of the community.
   – Although the primary responsibility for securing resources for action is with each individual organization or Action Team, they can request assistance from the entire organization for major projects.

Case Study – Effective Use of Resources (Partners for a Better Pine Bluff)

One of the reasons the overall community development effort initiated by Partners for a Better Pine Bluff (PBPB) has been so successful is that several organizations contributed their time and resources:

– Partners for a Better Pine Bluff is an organization made up of volunteers who are working for the betterment of Pine Bluff, with the co-chairpersons and all other participants volunteer;
– another organization, Partners in Progress, provided the financial support to hire a part-time secretary;
– office space was donated by Worthen Bank;
– office equipment and supplies were provided by Pine Bluff Downtown Development, Inc., and
– over 200 organizations and individuals signed the Declaration of Economic Partnership (see Appendix E), pledging their involvement and support to this effort.
– PBPB has since filed for non-profit 501(c)3 status with the Internal Revenue Service, attracted grant funds, and hired a director.

Good communication can't guarantee success in your efforts, but poor communication guarantees you'll fail.

Price Pritchett
and Ron Pound
High Velocity Culture
Change

b) Sustain the momentum – nurture, recognize, and communicate.
- Keep in touch with all Action Teams, find out what problems they have and what they need. Address problems and resistance head-on.
- Nurture and provide support – moral, emotional, physical, problem solving, and financial.
- Recognize people every chance you get – for their contributions, for the part they play, for their accomplishments, and for their spirit. Use creative methods, and develop your own recognition program.
- Emphasize communication and information flow within Action Teams, between Action Teams, with key stakeholders, and with the public, using every available means: newspaper, radio, telephone, meetings, newsletters, and one to one.

c) Be open to emerging issues and concerns that may arise, and form Action Teams to address those issues and concerns.
- You have in place a tremendous mechanism to handle new issues and opportunities, and new issues can bring in new people into the community development effort.
- Identify the issue, bring the people together who have something at stake with the issue, and support their efforts to deal with it.

STEP 8: Evaluate the Overall Effort.

Who Needs to be Involved

a) Community Development Organization

b) Broad group of stakeholders in the community

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Come together to address these questions: Did we accomplish our goals? What was the impact of these actions? What did we learn from this experience? Where do we need to go from here?
- Evaluation efforts can be tremendously beneficial to all participants and to others, as they provide an opportunity to reflect about our successes, and to learn from our experience.
- Impact measurement is simply determining the impact of an effort on the community.
- Begin measuring impact with your actual accomplishments.
- Secondly, evaluate the impact of your accomplishments on the benchmark indicators you have selected.

Helpful Reference

For more information on benchmark indicators, refer to Appendix G: Benchmark Indicators.

Case Study – Ponderoso Community Betterment Association Evaluation

On December 10, 1989, the Ponderoso Community Betterment Association (PCBA) celebrated its victories and evaluated its efforts in community development. In five short months, the mobile home community in rural Warren County, Missouri, became organized, raised over $5,000 from bake sales, cutting firewood, and other fund raisers; rebuilt their main road to county specifications; surveyed their community for a new water district; and formed a youth organization. The association decided to have a celebration potluck dinner, and devote two hours to evaluating their efforts.

As PCBA members addressed several questions in small groups, the local state representative, state senator, and editor of a statewide rural magazine acted as participant observers, sharing their insights after the groups reported their results. The celebration/evaluation was very productive, as PCBA members came to a common understanding of the key factors for success and gained a renewed sense of enthusiasm for their community.

STEP 9: Celebrate Your Success.

Who Needs to be Involved

a) Community Development Organization

b) The entire community, including all generations

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Recognize everyone who was involved.
- Sharing credit and recognition costs nothing but has a tremendous effect on people and organizations.

If you are too busy to celebrate your success, you are too busy.

b) Strengthen the sense of community.
- Sponsoring an art contest at the high school, developing a theme song for the community, and developing a video of the community are additional ways to strengthen the sense of community.
- Create some kind of event that brings people together – a meal, presentations, and sharing results.
- In the example evaluation effort described above, it was easy to celebrate the successes of the past year and honor particular individuals and organizations for their tremendous work.

c) Come to closure on major projects.
- It is very difficult for most community leaders to be heavily involved in development efforts for a long period of time. Providing a mechanism to celebrate success and close major projects recognizes the extraordinary effort put forth, and gives people a break.
- The overall effort can still continue, although perhaps at a less intense level, until the next major project comes along.

STEP 10: Create an Ongoing Development Process.

Who Needs to be Involved

a) Community Development Organization

b) Broad group of stakeholders in the community

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Take a fresh look at the strategic vision and action plan.
- Besides the issues that have been addressed, are there are some parts of the plan that are no longer appropriate or valid?
- Are there emerging issues in your community that need to be addressed?

b) Reach out to new leaders.
- Who else could be involved in this effort?
- A teacher appreciation breakfast, a visit to a major employer, or the welcome wagon for newcomers to the community all offer the opportunity to interest new people in this vital effort.

c) Institutionalize the process through volunteer or paid staff and other mechanisms.
- Having a staff person, whether full or part time, volunteer or paid, can make a huge difference in keeping people informed and involved.
- Consider asking a retiree or someone else who is not employed full time to fill this role.
- Investigate supporting this position by various programs, such as the Delta Service Corps, Americorps, VISTA, or internship programs from universities in the state.

A vision without a task is but a dream. A task without a vision is drudgery. But a vision and a task are the hope of the world.

Church in Sussex,
England, 1730

d) Develop long-term funding.
- Develop an annual fund raising drive and reach out to major employers in the area.
- Apply for grants and large donations from current or former community residents that could fund an endowment.
- Form a community foundation that would support this effort over the long term.

e) Sustain the momentum and commit to the long term.
- Weave your strategic vision and action plan into the very fabric of your community, so that its role, as a blueprint for action and a beacon that guides development, becomes business as usual.
- Commitment to the long term is essential for community development, as some projects require sustained effort over time.

STRATEGIC VISIONING COMPONENT

Developing a Strategic Vision and Action Plan – An Overview

The process that follows is an elaboration of Step 4 in the overall community development process: "Develop a Strategic Vision and Action Plan". It focuses on five basic questions that are addressed in three strategic visioning meetings and displayed on the following figure. Brief agendas for the three meetings are presented, followed by commentary, examples, and case studies.

1) WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?	(Learning from the past)
2) WHERE ARE YOU NOW?	(Examining the present)
3) WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?	(Describing the emerging environment and your desired future)
4) HOW WILL YOU GET THERE?	(Developing a plan of action)
5) HOW WILL YOU KNOW WHEN YOU ARE THERE? (OPTIONAL)	(Measuring success)

NOTE: A special thanks to the citizens of Montgomery County, particularly the Ouachita River Valley Partners for Progress, who contributed to this publication, and serve as an example.

Strategic Visioning Meeting Agendas

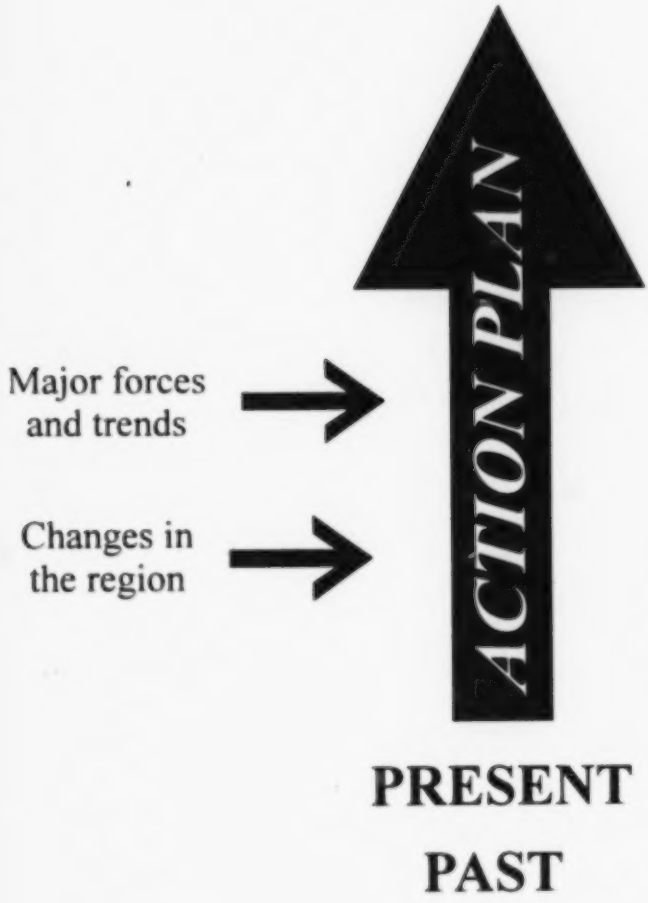
STRATEGIC VISION MEETING #1:
Where Have You Been and Where Are You Now?

7 p.m. **Welcome and Introductions**
Overview of the Strategic Visioning Process
Where Have You Been?
- Why was your community formed and how has it changed?
- Identification and discussion of significant, defining events and trends.
- Present selected socio-economic data about your community.

Break
Where Are You Now?
- Describe your community today and its purpose in light of the changes discussed.
- Draw a strategic map of your community in the region.
- Conduct a SWOT analysis of your community – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Tasks to be Performed Before the Next Meeting
10 p.m. **Adjourn**

Figure 6. Past, Present, and Future



5) How will you know when you are there? (Optional)

- **Describe intended accomplishments.**
- **Identify benchmark indicators and set targets for the future.**

4) How will you get there?

- **Form Action Teams for each theme/key issue.**
- **Action Teams develop long-term goals, strategies, and projects.**
- **Identify key players, resources, and capacities.**
- **Develop implementation plan.**

3) Where do you want to go?

- **Examine the emerging, regional, national, and global environment.**
- **Describe your shared vision of the future.**
- **Identify major themes or issues.**

2) Where are you now?

- **Describe your community today.**
- **Draw a strategic map of your community in the center of your region.**
- **Conduct SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats).**

1) Where have you been?

- **Examine the historical foundations of your community and how it has changed.**
- **Identify significant, defining events.**
- **Present socio-economic data.**

STRATEGIC VISION MEETING #2:
Where Do You Want To Go and How Will You Get There?

7 p.m. **Welcome and Introductions**
Overview
Where Do You Want To Go?
– What forces and trends are going on in your region, our nation, or the world that will impact your future?
– Describe your desired community in the year 2005.
How will you get there?
– Form Action Teams around key issues or themes of the vision.
– Action Teams develop long term goals.
Break
– Brainstorm strategies to achieve your long term goals and describe them as **projects.**
– Action teams identify **key players, resources, and assets** and put them on a resource map for your community.
Report Back To The Overall Group
Tasks to be Performed Before the Next Meeting
10 p.m. **Adjourn**

STRATEGIC VISION MEETING #3:
Completing the Action Plan

7 p.m. **Welcome and Introductions**
Overview
Action Teams Meet to Continue Work on "How Will You Get There?"
– Action Teams develop a Regional Resource Map for their issues, listing resources from outside of the community that can support this effort.
How Will You Know When You Are There?
– Describe what you want to accomplish with this project and set targets.
Break
– Select **benchmark indicators** to reveal the impact of this project on your community or county.
– Plan the next step: Seek Feedback and Commitment from the Community.
10 p.m. **Adjourn**

It takes people with vision to help people with dreams.

Author Unknown

The agendas above can be changed to fit the local community. For example, if a community chooses not to include Question #5, "How You Will Know You Are There?," a 1 1/2 hour session on economic development strategies could be included. It is best to include that in the second meeting to provide the participants with a week to reflect on the strategies presented.

The three meeting format is not fixed either. A community could hold a retreat with two sessions on a Saturday and the third sometime during the following week, or do all three sessions during a 1 1/2 day retreat.

Good meetings don't just happen. They are carefully planned events designed to maximize participation and buy-in by the participants. A good rule of thumb is that 80 to 90 percent of your effort should go toward

preparing for the community meeting and continuing the work after the meeting, with 10 to 20 percent of your effort occurring during the actual meeting.

Effective use of time is critical. Be sure to start on time, appoint a time-keeper that keeps everyone on track, and end on time.

Developing a Strategic Vision and Action Plan – Commentary, Examples, and Case Studies

Question 1) Where have you been?

Purpose: Acknowledge the investment that leaders have made in your community and their successes.
Demonstrate that your community and the larger environment are in a process of continual change.
REDUCE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE.

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Describe why your community was formed (its purpose), and how your community has changed since then.
PROCESS: Small group discussion for 15 minutes

b) Describe your community in the past and identify the **significant, defining events and trends** that took place during the decades of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. This is a Decades Brainstorm (14). Go further back if you have older people in the group.
PROCESS: Small group discussion for 15 minutes

NOTE: An efficient way to address these questions is break into small groups, with even-numbered groups discussing a) at the same time that odd-numbered groups discuss b). Then allow 35 minutes for all of them to report out and for discussion. Asking each person reporting to contribute only one key point, or add only those points not already covered will streamline the process even further.

NOTE: Discussion of significant, defining events and trends:
- What observations do you have about these events and trends?
- How did each of these impact the community (jobs, income, population, esprit de corps, etc.)
- Circle those events and trends that were initiated by the local community.
- If the community had not taken action, what would have happened?
- Who was involved in these various events? Who was not involved?
- What worked well? What didn't work so well? How could have that been different?
- What can you do about these kinds of events in the future?
- What does this tell you about being for or against change?
- What legacy do you want to pass on to your children?

c) Present selected socio-economic data about changes taking place in your community/ county in the past 40 years.
PROCESS: Present in graph or bar chart form to overall group -15 minutes.

No city can live entirely in the past without perishing. But the future prosperity of any place where a people work, love, worship, play, relax, and struggle as a community grows out of the roots and heritage from which it sprang.

Southwest Times Record
Centennial Edition
September 26, 1982

As recently as the 1960s almost one-half of all workers in the industrialized countries were involved in making (or helping to make) things. By the year 2000, however, no developed country will have more than one-sixth or one-eighth of its work force in the traditional roles of making and moving goods.

Already an estimated two-thirds of U.S. employees work in the service sector, and "knowledge" is becoming our most important "product". This calls for different organizations, as well as different kinds of workers.

Peter F. Drucker
The Post-Capitalist Society

Question 2) Where are you now?

Purpose: Begin with the reality of the present
Surface real issues confronting the community
STIMULATE STRATEGIC THINKING

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Describe your community today and its purpose in light of the changes discussed above. It may be helpful to draw a map of your community.
PROCESS: Overall group – 10 minutes

b) Draw a strategic map of your community in the center of your region. Include everything that impacts your community: other communities, highways, rivers, lakes, natural resource areas, and major developments. Describe how each element impacts your community. See the example on the next page.
PROCESS: Small groups develop these for 15 minutes, then share with the overall group for 10 minutes.

c) Do a **SWOT** Analysis of your entire community, identifying **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. This means taking a macro view of your entire community, seeking to identify what has real potential to move your community forward and what is holding it back.
PROCESS: Small groups: odd-numbered groups work on strengths and weaknesses for 15 minutes while the even-numbered groups work on opportunities and threats. Then both report out for 15 minutes, with an opportunity to add to each).

Example SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:
- Hard work ethic
- Beautiful countryside
- Strong community spirit

Weaknesses:
- Lack of coordination for economic development
- Lack of vision in our leadership
- Low skilled work force

Opportunities:
- High traffic count on state highway
- Potential for tourism development
- Attracting retirees also has merit

Threats:
- Our low-wage industry could move elsewhere for even lower wages
- Health care services are lacking here
- Our groundwater supply is vulnerable to pollution

NOTE: The SWOT analysis is similar to an automobile inspection. Sometimes a tuneup will greatly improve your car's performance, while a flat or low tire is holding you back.

Question 3) Where do you want to go?

Purpose: Describe the emerging environment in your region and the world.
Analyze the impact of this environment on your community.
CREATE A COMPELLING VISION.

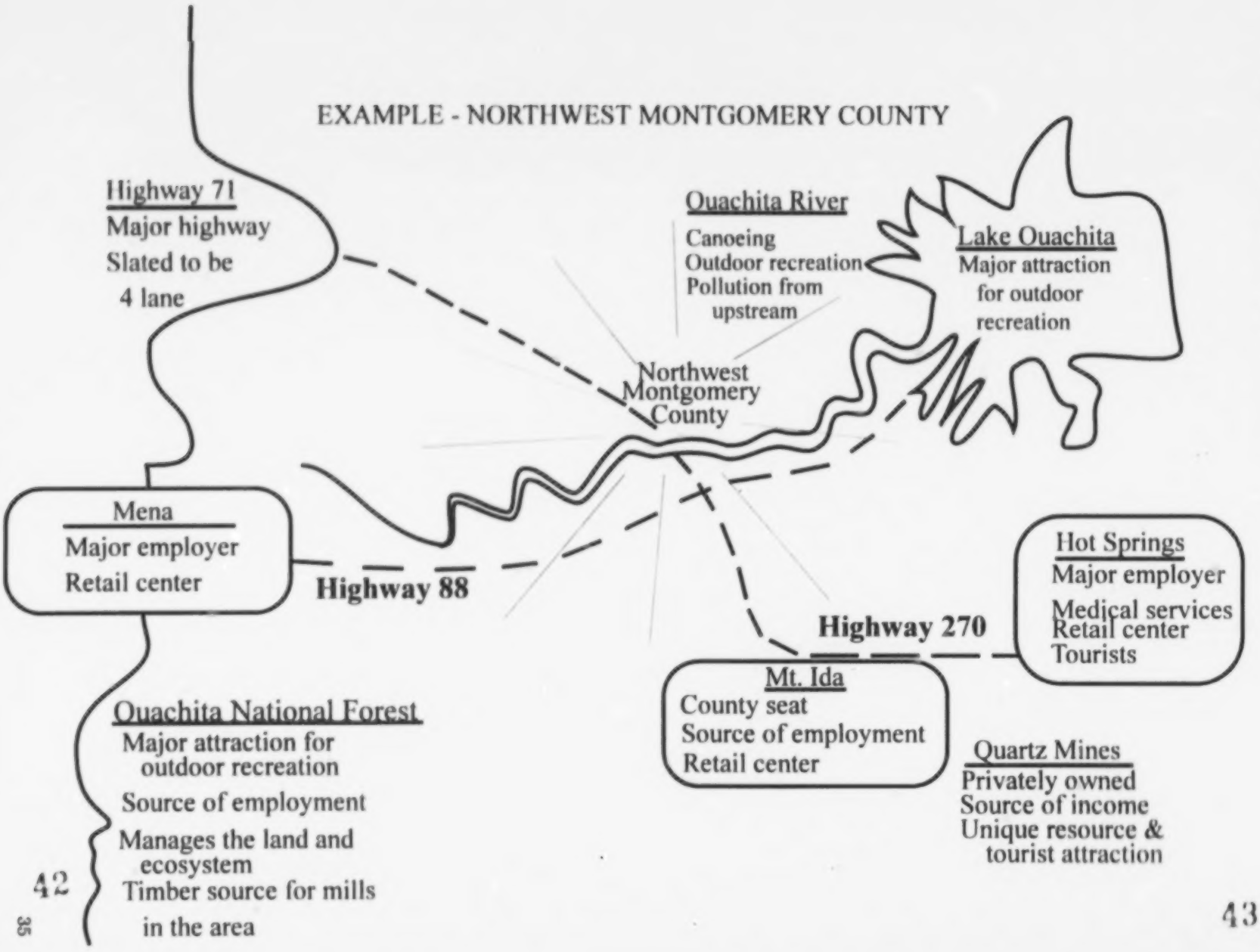


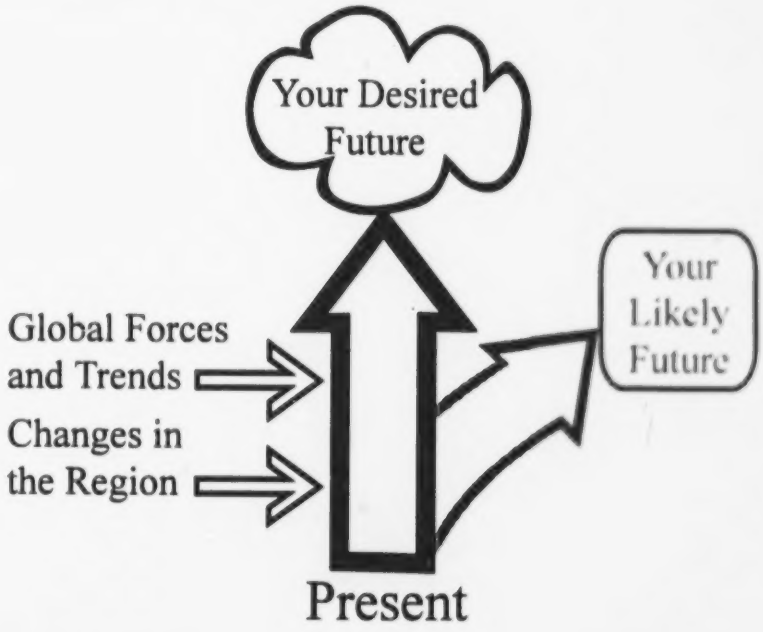
Figure 7. A Strategic Map of Your Community in the Region

NOTE: We live in a time of significant change, when global forces and trends have real impacts on what we do and how we live in Arkansas. Not acknowledging the power and direction of these forces and trends leaves us vulnerable to their impacts. Informed leaders can make good decisions about what is important and what alternatives are possible. The most effective means for stopping your community from drifting toward a likely but undesirable future is to develop and implement an action plan that carries you toward your desired future.

To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it – but we must sail and not drift, nor lie at anchor.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Figure 8: The Impact of Forces and Trends



Tasks to Accomplish

a) What forces and trends are going on in your region that will impact your future? Return to the strategic map of your community in the region and put a star by those things that you expect to change significantly in the next ten years, and explain how you expect them to change.
PROCESS: Overall group - 10 minutes

Example forces and trends in your region:

* The number of trees being cut in the nearby national forest is being reduced, affecting our timber industry.
* The tremendous number of people traveling to a major recreational area within a one hour drive presents us with a real opportunity.

b) What national or global forces and trends are taking place that will impact your future? This is the world into which you are projecting your desired future.
PROCESS: Discuss this with the person next to you for a couple of minutes, then report out to the overall group - 10 minutes.

Developing a vision does not require any special kind of technical skill. People get excited about developing a vision because it gives them permission to talk about their dreams, and do so in a non-threatening way.

Jerry Wade
University of Missouri - Columbia

Example forces and trends in our nation and the world:

* Increased use of computers and other technology raises the skill level needed by today's work force.
* The majority of new jobs now come from the development of small and medium-size businesses.

c) Review your SWOT analysis – what additional threats and opportunities are posed by these forces and trends as they impact your community?
PROCESS: Overall group - 5 minutes

Example – additional threats and opportunities:

* Additional threat – our low skill work force is particularly vulnerable because high technology is becoming more and more common.
* Additional opportunity – develop tourism packages that tie into the nearby major recreational destination.

d) Describe your desired community in the year 2005 (particularly its economy, quality of life, human and community dimensions), by completing this sentence: "Within 5 or 10 years, I would like to see _____ _____ in our community." (You might ask the meeting participants to tell a story about what they want their community to be like in the future).
PROCESS: Ask each individual to jot their response to this question on a 3"X 5" card, then share with a small group. Write the responses on large sheets of paper, then share with the overall group. Ask for volunteers to take these statements, develop a draft vision statement, and bring it to the next meeting.

Helpful Reference

For excellent examples of vision statements, refer to Appendix B: Sample Vision Statements.

NOTE: Some communities ask participants to draw a picture of what they want their community to become on large sheets of paper, then share these pictures. This works well with people of all socio-economic levels.

Case Study – A Vision for the Ouachita River Valley of Montgomery County

The Ouachita River Valley of Montgomery County is a natural, scenic area. The Ouachita Mountains, River, and National Forest offer real opportunities for retirement, recreation, and country living.

Our people value neighborliness, hard work, and education, and we work together to sustain our high quality of life for future generations. We invite others to come, enjoy, and appreciate the natural beauty and amenities of our area.

e) With guidance from the overall group, organize all of the ideas presented into major themes or key issues. Watch for key phrases, images, and metaphors that capture the essence of what people are saying. Ask everyone to consider which Action Team they would like to join.
PROCESS: Overall group - 10 minutes

NOTE: These will become the basis for forming Action Teams. Try to avoid overlap, and make sure that everyone knows what each theme includes. Usually 4 to 6 themes (Action Teams) works best, but if community interest is strong and over 100 people attend the strategic visioning sessions, you may go up to 12 themes. The thematic Action Teams are the vehicles for involving your community in this process.

Example – vision ideas under the major theme of tourism development:

* Hotels and motels
* U-pick gardens
* River festival/races
* Scenic drive
* Historical theme for our community
* Summer employment for youth
* Small business development
* Plant to bottle spring water
* Small business development:
  – antique and gift shops
  – bed and breakfast inns
  – RV park
* Community support for tourism

Question 4) How will you get there?

Purpose: Form Action Teams for each theme/key issue.
Action Teams develop long term goals and strategies.
DEVELOP A PLAN FOR ACTION.

Tasks to Accomplish

a) Ask everyone to select the theme/Action Team they are most interested in, and break into these Action Teams. Ask for a volunteer to take the vision ideas and develop one or more long term goals for the action team. **A long term goal is a general statement of what you would like to see happen**, and takes from 2 to 10 years to accomplish. Ask the team members to add to the vision ideas by projecting themselves out ten years, and describing what they would like to see for this theme. Add these ideas to the list of vision ideas.
PROCESS: Action Teams - 10 minutes

A great way to stimulate activity and progress is to set big, hairy, audacious goals (BHAGS).

James C. Collins
and Jerry I. Porras
Built to Last

Note: James Collins and Jerry Porras (6) describe big, hairy, audacious goals (BHAGS, pronounced "bee-hags") as clear, compelling, and outside your comfort zone. They should express your community's core values, require heroic effort to achieve, and serve as a unifying focal point for action.

Example long term goals (BHAGS):

– Develop an educational system that prepares our youth for responsible citizenship and economic prosperity in the 21st century.
– Provide affordable housing for all of our people.
– Develop a system of roads, water, and sewer that will support growth in our community through the first decade of the 21st century.
– Develop a tourism industry that provides significant employment opportunities for local people and preserves our natural environment.

Helpful Reference

For additional examples of BHAGS, refer to Appendix F: Themes, Slogans, Mottos, and Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals.

Case Study – Forty Goals for Chattanooga

In an inspiring story of broad-based community development, citizens from 200 organizations in Chattanooga, Tennessee formed Chattanooga VISION 2000 to plan for their future. After developing a vision and forty goals to achieve that vision, a Vision Fair was held for people to learn about the goals, prioritize them, and sign up for task forces. Five years later the process was repeated with REVISION 2000. Within 8 years, 85 percent of their goals were achieved, leading to 700 new jobs and over $100 million investment in the community.

b) Ask the volunteers to share the draft long term goal they were to develop. Discuss it, change it or keep it, and agree on the long term goal for your Action Team.
PROCESS: Action Teams - 10 minutes

c) Brainstorm different strategies you can use to achieve your long term goal. Brainstorming generates the greatest number of possible approaches and solutions in a short period of time and is an effective tool in group activities. **Set aside your judgements and critical comments** and focus on expressing many creative possibilities, including some that are wild and crazy. The more you generate, the more likely you are to discover some extraordinary possibilities.
PROCESS: Action Teams - 15 minutes

Sometimes small people with small minds try to shoot down big ideas. Think big anyway.

Author Unknown

Example strategies for the long term goal of developing a tourism industry that provides significant employment opportunities for local people and preserves our natural environment:

* Open a tourism information center
* Inventory our tourism attractions
* Invite the President, the Governor, and the Prime Minister of Japan
* Develop mailing list for future promotions and attracting retirees
* Form a county tourism council
* Sponsor festivals
* Develop marketing plan
* Connect with the regional tourism council
* Develop bed and breakfast inns
* Target tourists visiting Hot Springs

Helpful Reference

Refer to Appendix H: Building Scenarios and Appendix I: Cause-Effect Diagrams for two very useful tools for Action Teams.

d) Select the strategies that are most likely to achieve your vision, and describe them as **projects** that can be accomplished (or begun) within one year. (These are really short term goals).
PROCESS: Action Teams - 15 minutes

Communities have never been built upon their deficiencies. Building community has always depended upon mobilizing the capacities and assets of a people and a place. That is why a map of neighborhood assets is necessary if local people are to find the way toward empowerment and renewal.

John L. McKnight
and John Kretzmann
Mapping Community Capacity

NOTE: Try to select at least one project that can involve the whole community in a fairly short time, that is physical and tangible, that is meaningful to people and is something people have wanted to do for years. A community cleanup day, a Christmas parade, or a potluck fund-raiser are often good places to start. You should also think of longer term projects that are needed, but won't be initiated for a couple of years, such as a new high school.

Example projects:

- Develop a fall festival that centers around the Ouachita River, offering crafts, food, crystals, and other local talent.
- Inventory our tourism attractions and develop a marketing plan in cooperation with the regional tourism council and with the assistance of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.
- Create day trips and publicity that targets tourists visiting Hot Springs.
- Open a tourism information center in cooperation with the chamber of commerce.

NOTE: A really great way to generate strategies and project ideas is by convening a focus group (7 to 12 individuals) who are concerned about that issue, conducting a SWOT analysis for the issue, and brainstorming strategies and project possibilities.

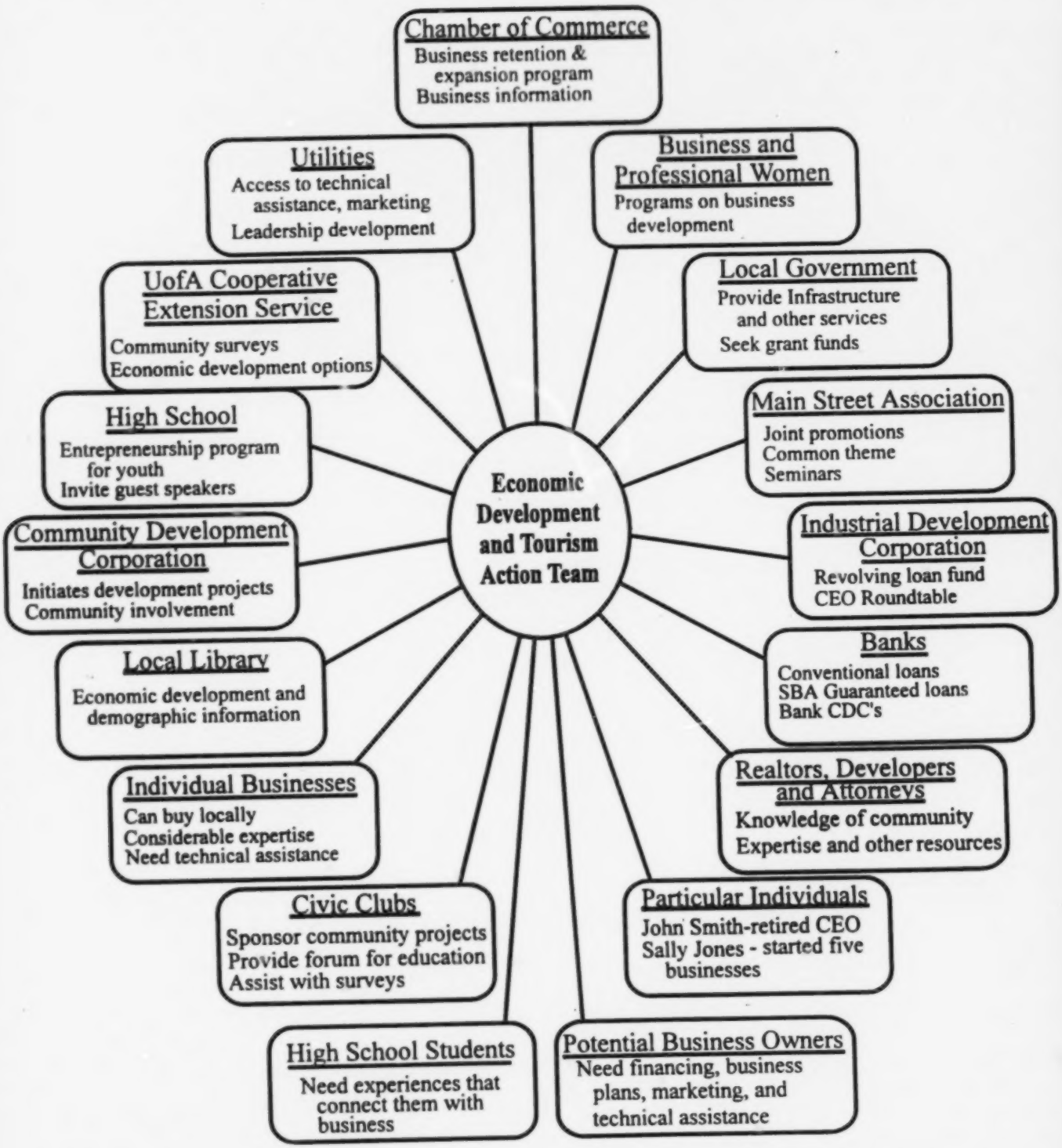
e) Action teams identify **key players** – those organizations, companies, agencies, institutions, and individuals in the community that need to be involved to make this project successful or have something to contribute to or gain from this project. Include those organizations formed for citizenship, business, financial, cultural, religious, and governmental purposes. **Put them on a resource map for your community (see example on the next page).**
PROCESS: Action Teams - 10 minutes

Case Study – Involving Diverse Organizations In Your Projects

On Highway 64 between Selmer and Memphis, Tennessee, the following organizations have pledged to keep at least one mile of the highway right-of-way clean: the Gray Family, Selmer Moose Lodge, Corrections Management Corporation, Hornsby Ruritan Club, Vandiver's Hobby Hill Restaurant, Boliver Central High School PTA, Somerville Rotary Club, and Ed Sharp Realty Company. NONE OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS WERE FORMED FOR THIS PURPOSE, BUT THEY ARE ALL COMMITTED TO THIS WORTHWHILE ENDEAVOR. YOU CAN INVOLVE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY PROJECTS AS WELL.

f) Action teams list other **resources, assets, and capacities** in the community that could be available to support this effort and add them to your Community Resource Map. (Include the private, public, and non-profit sectors).
PROCESS: Action Teams - 10 minutes

Figure 9. Community Resource Map for Economic Development and Tourism



g) Develop a Regional Resource Map for your issue, listing resources from outside of the community that can support this effort. **See example on the next page.**
PROCESS: Action Teams - 15 minutes

NOTE: Although outside resources can be very helpful in triggering and supporting action projects, the ultimate success of your community development efforts will depend on the ability of your own citizens and organizations to get things done.

h) After gaining feedback from the community, develop implementation plans to accomplish the goals: what needs to be done, by whom, when and where, with what resources. This includes assignment of responsibilities and timelines for completion.

NOTE: It may be helpful to develop an implementation chart for the implementation steps. This implementation chart can be published, and it can also be made into a large chart and posted in a prominent public location. One advantage of this is that major projects need not compete for the community's attention, often leading to both of them failing. An example follows.

Example Implementation Time Chart:

Projects	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005
Develop fall festival	_____					
Develop spring festival		_____				
Do a marketing plan	_____		Update _____		Update _____	
Create day trips to Hot Springs	_____					
Open tourism info center			_____			

Time used to be a tyrant.
Today it's an assassin.

R. R. Donnele and Sons

Case Study – The Delray Beach Decade of Excellence

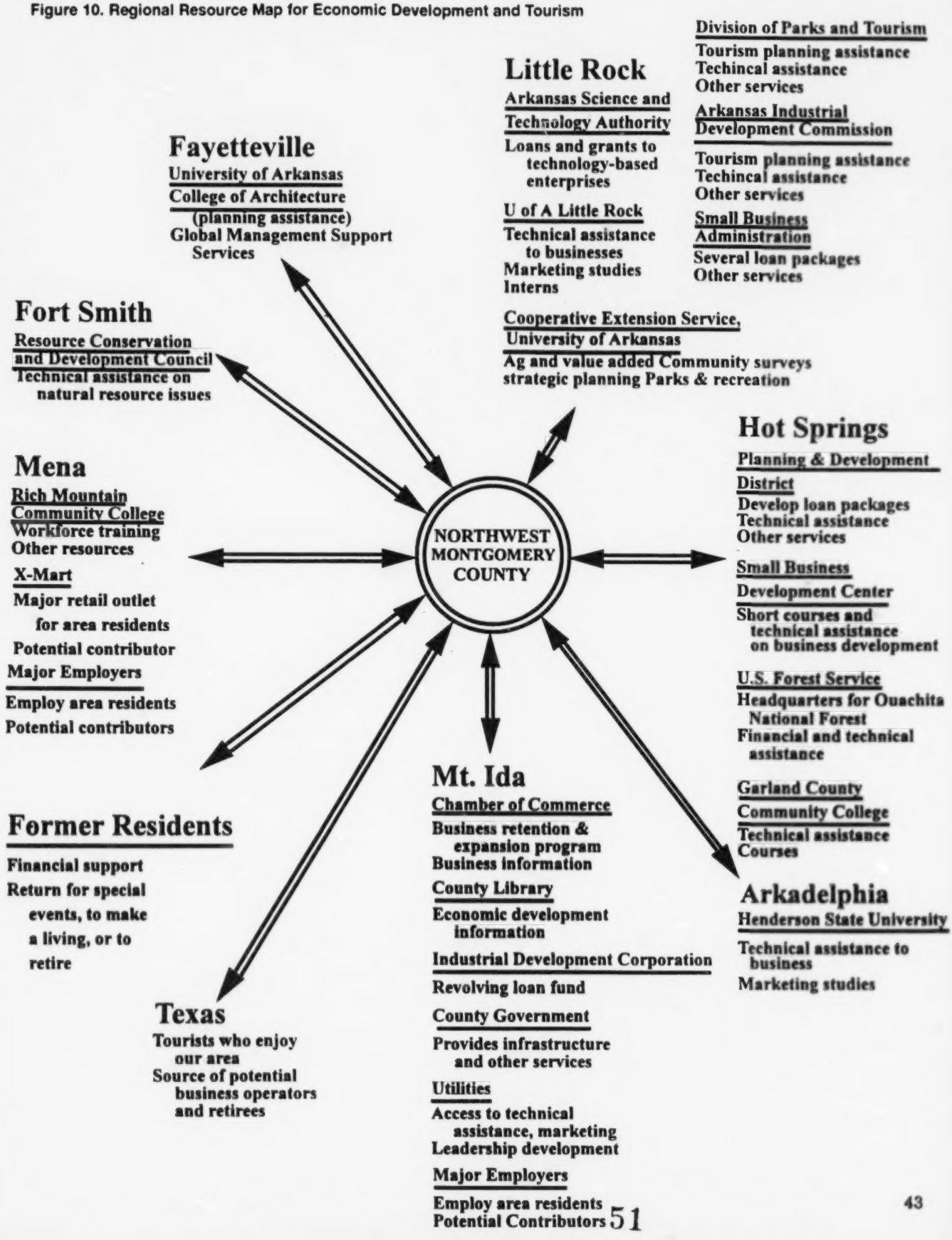
In May of 1988, more than 100 citizens of Delray Beach, Florida, participated in a Visions 2000 retreat to plan for the future of their community. The retreat led to the development of a strategic vision and action plan called "Decade of Excellence", which outlined long and short term goals and projects, including capital improvements and bond issues. These efforts have successfully stimulated local economic growth and made Delray Beach a model of development for the nation.

Question 5) How will you know when you get there? OPTIONAL

Purpose: Set targets for each of your projects
Develop benchmark indicators to measure progress
DEMONSTRATE OVERALL IMPACT

NOTE: This question is optional because some communities will be satisfied with a strategic vision and action plan, while others will want to develop targets and benchmark indicators.

Figure 10. Regional Resource Map for Economic Development and Tourism



Tasks to Accomplish

a) PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Describe what you want to accomplish with this project in very concrete terms, and set targets. Targets should be reachable but measurable accomplishments.
PROCESS: Action Teams - 25 minutes

Example Accomplishments:

	One Year Target	Five Year Target
Fall festival	2,000 attendance	5,000 attendance
	$10,000 festival income	$25,000 festival income
	250 people from elsewhere	1250 people from elsewhere
Marketing plan and brochure	2,000 copies mailed out	10,000 copies mailed out
	500 new people visit	2000 new people visit

NOTE: Surveying people who come to festivals is a useful way to measure economic impact.

b) PROJECT IMPACT: Review the results of your earlier visioning session and select **benchmark indicators** to reveal the impact of this project on your community or county. Chart them on a graph or bar chart, including what you want those benchmark indicators to be 2, 5, and 10 years from now. Select benchmark indicators that are simple and for which data is readily available, or can be developed without much difficulty. **Benchmark indicators can help you stay on track to achieve your long-term goals.**
PROCESS: Action Teams - 30 minutes

Example benchmark indicators:

Traffic count on a major highway
Total travel and tourism expenditures*
Travel and tourism generated payroll*
Travel and tourism generated employment*
Local tax receipts from travel and tourism*
Number of visitors*
Number of new travel and tourism businesses started, such as canoe rentals, restaurants, and campgrounds.

*This data is available by county from the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism.

NOTE: It is useful to compare the benchmarks from your community or county with surrounding communities or counties, with the state average, and with the national average. If at all possible, select **outcome benchmarks** (such as the number of students who can use computers), rather than **output benchmarks** (the output of a system, such as the number of students who took a computer course). Some benchmark information may be hard to find, but may be worth the effort.

A little known fact is that the Apollo moon missions were on course less than 1 percent of the time. The mission was composed of almost constant mid-course corrections. That's also true of most business [and community] situations.

James A. Belasco
Teaching the Elephant to Dance

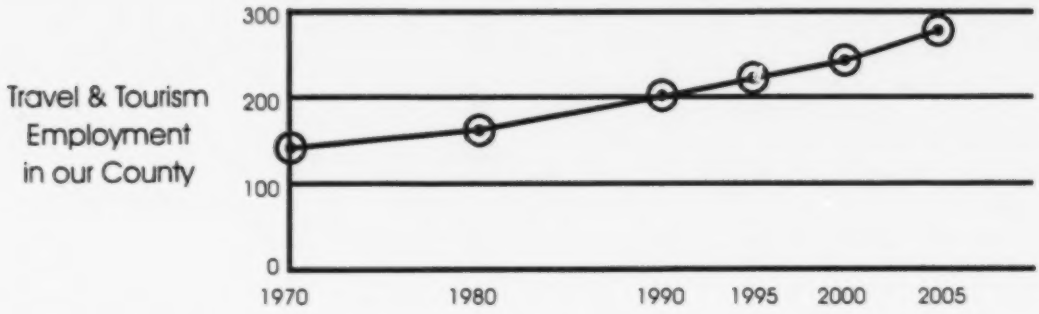
Helpful Reference

The Commission for Arkansas' Future has pioneered the use of benchmark indicators in Arkansas, and the indicators they selected are in Appendix G.

Example Benchmark Indicator and Projections:

Benchmark Indicator	1995	1997	2004
Additional travel and tourism jobs	4 full-time, 10 part-time	9 full-time, 20 part-time	20 full-time, 60 part-time

Figure 11: Benchmark Indicator Graph for Travel and Tourism Employment



Helpful Reference

A Strategic Vision and Action Plan Worksheet is included after the Appendices.

Summary

The primary problem of many [communities and] organizations appears to be a mindset of:

SURVIVAL rather than of POTENTIAL
MANAGEMENT rather than LEADERSHIP
DOING THINGS RIGHT rather than
DOING THE RIGHT THINGS.

To be successful, we must:
- *See the Big Picture,*
- *Decide to Lead,*
- *Do so with a boldness and vision.*

Dale Lick, President
University of Maine

You now have the future of your community in your hands – a tool and a process that can bring your fellow citizens together to do extraordinary things – to shape the destiny of your community. You can see this expressed in the Summary Example that follows and in Appendix J: A Story of the 21st Century.

The future belongs to visionary communities – those communities which have taken the time and trouble to think about, talk about, and describe their desired future, and take action to bring that vision into reality. These visionary communities have a tremendous advantage over other communities – the alignment of the personal creativity, energy, and resources of their citizens, their leaders, and their institutions with a shared image of its future, grounded in the core values of the community.

We are moving into the Information Age – a time when borders and boundaries are being transcended by telecommunications and other technologies. We are competing in a global economy for resources, for customers, for visitors, for new residents, and for people seeking a great place to live. The new definition of haves and have-nots in the Information Age is not based merely on economic status, but on access to information and being in a stimulating, supportive environment – **a vision community**.

A strategic vision exceeds importance; it is vital. A vision acts as a lighthouse – a beacon to your community that gives direction as well as warnings. You can utilize this powerful tool in your own community.

Elements	Example
MISSION	– The mission of the Ouachita River Valley Partners for Progress is to enhance the quality of life and preserve the scenic beauty of the Ouachita River Valley.
VISION	– The Ouachita River Valley of Montgomery County is a natural scenic area. The Ouachita Mountains, River, and National Forest offer real opportunities for retirement, recreation, and country living. Our people value neighborliness, hard work, and education, and we work together to sustain our high quality of life for future generations. We invite others to come, enjoy, and appreciate the natural beauty and amenities of our area.
LONG TERM GOALS	– Develop a tourism industry that provides significant employment opportunities for local people and preserves our natural environment.
STRATEGIES	– Sponsor festivals. Inventory tourism attractions and develop a brochure. Target tourists visiting Hot Springs.
PROJECTS	– Develop fall festival that centers around the Ouachita River, offering crafts, food, crystals, and local talent. Inventory our tourism attractions and develop a marketing plan in cooperation with the regional tourism council and the assistance of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN & TIMELINE	– Fall festival to be held in fall of 1996. Inventory and marketing plan to be in place by August, 1995.
TARGETS & BENCHMARK INDICATORS	– Spring festival attendance in 1995: 2,000 Spring festival attendance in 2000: 5,000 Travel and tourism jobs created by 2000: 50 full-time and 100 part-time jobs

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IF YOU ALREADY HAVE A PLAN

If your community already has a plan but it is not being used, the following scenarios may be helpful. In most cases, you should see what elements of the existing plan are appropriate and can be utilized in your new effort.

You should take a fresh look at your existing plan and consider initiating a new process when:

THE EXISTING PLAN IS NOT AVAILABLE: You have heard your community has a strategic plan, but no one has been able to find a copy.

THE EXISTING PLAN IS NOT OPERATIVE: Leaders and citizens are aware of the plan, but they do not refer to it or use it in their activities. It is truly "on the shelf."

THE EXISTING PLAN IS NOT APPROPRIATE: It has been three to five years since your community went through the process, the environment has changed, and the plan does not allow for these new realities.

THE EXISTING PLAN NEVER WAS SUPPORTED BY THE PEOPLE: It was a top-down plan pulled together by some technical planners and a few community leaders, and never really garnered the support of the community.

YOU HAVE NEW LEADERSHIP IN YOUR COMMUNITY: There has been a significant change in leadership positions in your community since the existing plan was developed. Leaders are most likely to support those plans they helped to create.

THE MOMENTUM IN YOUR COMMUNITY HAS SLOWED TO A CRAWL: Nothing is happening in your community and you need a triggering mechanism to bring people together again to work toward a common end.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE VISION STATEMENTS

It is with some reluctance that we comment on these very creative and meaningful vision and goal statements, because we respect the right of each community and organization to create and describe its desired future in its own way. However, to provide insight to you, we add comments so that you may see how these vision statements fit into the format of the strategic visioning process explained in this publication. We have included several to show that vision need not adhere to a particular, fixed format, but can be expressed in a variety of ways. We congratulate these communities and organizations for their excellent work and wish them every success in creating their desired futures.

> **NOTE:** One kind of vision statement not included in this appendix is a **vision story**, which is a one to two page narrative describing a community in the future. Although they can be very compelling, their length limits their usefulness; vision stories are usually too long to fit on a brochure.

Vision Statement for Hot Springs, Arkansas

> **NOTE:** The Hot Springs Vision in Action Task Force first created a vision statement of the whole community, then broke into work groups to address specific issues. Each work group developed an overall statement, such as "There's a town in Arkansas that is friendly and responsive to residents, visitors, industry, and the environment." When they saw the quality of these statements, the task force used them to replace the earlier vision statement. You may want to do the same in your visioning process.
>
> The Strategic Vision statement for Hot Springs is in boldface letters. Each element of the vision statement is a long term goal statement, reflecting a key issue listed under it, along with components of that long term goal.

There's a town in Arkansas that is friendly and responsive to residents and visitors, industry, and the environment.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Job retention and development, long-range land use plan, and economic indicator charts

It's a place where every mind is valued. Where excellence and lifelong learning are encouraged.

EDUCATION: General education level

This is a clean town surrounded by sparkling lakes and green mountains protected by people who care.

ENVIRONMENT: Parks and recreation, environmental education, solid waste and recycling management, recycling of waste oil, wastewater treatment, rehabilitation of older and abandoned buildings, electric or alternative fuel buses and trolleys, and environmental quality control and long-range planning.

It's a place where art and fun are both passion and commerce.

TOURISM/HOSPITALITY/ENTERTAINMENT: Research, education, and information sharing; tourism development; accessibility to tourist attractions.

In this town cooperation is everyone's commitment.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Garland County/Hot Springs Substance Abuse Program, fire protection services, Hot Springs Village and Hot Springs, law enforcement, support Sister City Program, city/count government communications network, transportation, wastewater, and proposed organizational structure.

It's a place where each individual is significant and human life is special.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND HUMAN SERVICES: Health and wellness, community services, and housing

It's the 21st Century. The town is Hot Springs. It's like this because of you.

The Arkansas 2000 Vision (From the Commission for Arkansas' Future)

NOTE: The Commission for Arkansas' Future, with input from citizens all across the state, developed a theme, a vision statement, a statement of core values, and a summary statement:

Honoring Yesterday's Values
Investing Today's Resources
Achieving Tomorrow's Potential

Our vision is that **Arkansas** can fully and uniquely participate in our nation's progress by educating and caring for our people, by managing our natural resources, by developing our economy, and by strengthening our society.

Our personal commitment is to these five values:

1) Educating our people so that Arkansas will reach literacy and mathematical skill levels essential for growing and developing in the information age and the global economy;

2) Caring for all Arkansans as individuals worthy of respect and of attention to their basic human needs;

3) Managing our resources through intentionally protecting, preserving, and using Arkansas' natural resources to our best advantage now and in the future;

4) Developing our economy through planning for community and economic development in Arkansas and its communities;

5) Strengthening our society through developing a higher quality of life for all Arkansans.

In stating this vision, we believe that Arkansans are and will continue to be proud and responsible citizens in an economically, socially, and politically interdependent world.

Florence, Colorado

A healthy, progressive and caring town that celebrates the past, with adequate facilities and services to support well-planned growth while maintaining rural life quality. A community where our people have a voice in leadership and are ready to meet the challenges of the future.

Forrest City and Marianna, Arkansas

Forrest City and Marianna: a model community partnership in the Delta, which is a hub of economic and social opportunity, where everyone works together for a better quality of life.

Rock Hill, South Carolina

Rock Hill is the:

* **Recognized Historic City** of the metropolitan area with a distinctive physical identity based upon the historic structures and neighborhoods of its central core.

* **Functional City** of the metropolitan area with well planned and efficient systems of transportation, utilities, and urban services.

* **Garden City** of the metropolitan area, distinctive for its extensive system of landscaped streets, greenways, and gardens.

* **Premier Educational City** of the metropolitan area, recognized for the excellence and breadth of its institutions and programs.

* **Acknowledged Cultural City** of the metropolitan area with nationally renowned programs in public art and arts education.

* **Important Business City** of the metropolitan area, recognized as a premier location for quality businesses.

Lawrence County, Alabama

Entering the 21st century, Lawrence County will be a place where every citizen enjoys the opportunity of a better life through advances in education, job availability, housing, recreation, and a sense of being part of a quality community by the utilization of the county's human talents and physical resources.

A Vision of America

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal." ... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Booneville/South Logan County, Arkansas

Our vision for Booneville/South Logan County in the 21st Century is to be:

* A progressive and community oriented area which encourages citizen participation and involvement in programs and projects.

* An area which welcomes growth and embraces diversity in the work force and society.

* An area dedicated to preserving the beautiful natural environment while still building a sound economic base for our families' future.

* A community which provides a high quality education for our children which prepares them to successfully compete in a global economy.

* A community with many varied recreational and cultural activities for residents of all ages.

* A community which provides access to high quality health care for everyone.

* A community which recognizes and appreciates the contributions made by the agricultural and forestry industries, their products and their suppliers.

* A community ready, willing, and committed to meeting our full potential.

Stone County, Arkansas

The people of Stone County have a strong sense of place, of history, and culture; we know who we are. We are proud of our independent spirit and our willingness to speak our minds, and we come together to preserve our heritage, to talk through our common problems, and to forge our desired future.

We value learning and are committed to education for all ages, seeking:

* A vital local economy,
* A beautiful natural environment,
* A high quality of life, and
* A caring involved community.

National Education Goals 2000

NOTE: The National Education Goals provide an excellent example of a vision in a particular arena (education), that is composed of BHAGs – big, hairy, audacious goals.

1) By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.
2) By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will be increased to at least 90 percent.
3) By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
4) By the year 2000, U.S. students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.
5) By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6) By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined learning environment conducive to learning.

A Vision for Minnesota's Future

Minnesota will be a community of people who respect and care for one another.

We will sustain and enjoy the natural world.

Minnesota will have an economy that creates and shares wealth.

Our citizens will be good thinkers, creative, always learning, with the skills to compete internationally.

Our government will be responsive, efficient, and close to its citizens.

Minnesota Milestones
St. Paul, Minnesota

APPENDIX C: A BRIEF TEST FOR YOUR VISION STATEMENT

If you wonder if your statement is a mission statement or a vision statement, consider these questions:

1) Did you arrive at it through reflecting about your particular community, its potentials, its strengths and weaknesses, and what it can become?

2) Is your statement distinctive from those of many other communities (or organizations)?

3) Does it include the various parts of your community – economic, social, educational, etc., and describe what will take place in the future and with whom?

4) Does it transport you into the future and describe a desired destination?

5) Is it specific enough to provide direction for decision making and lead you to particular strategies?

6) Does the statement avoid generalities that lead it to try to become all things to all people? (A classic example: A friendly town with good people, good schools, and beautiful scenery.)

7) Does it stir your blood, engage your spirit, and motivate you to join with others to take action?

8) When you show it to someone who lives elsewhere, do they get excited and talk about wanting to move to your community?

If the answer to these questions is yes, you have a **strategic vision**.

APPENDIX D: TWELVE KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIC VISIONING AND ACTION PROCESS

Why do some communities begin great projects and then fail to achieve them? How do some communities marshal their resources and get everyone moving toward the same goal? Here are twelve keys to a successful strategic visioning and action process:

1) **Develop a passion for your community, for the vision, and for its realization**. You have before you an extraordinary opportunity to positively impact the future of your community for the rest of your life, and for your children. Together you can do things that are impossible for you as individuals, or as individual organizations. YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

2) **Be sensitive to timing.** The idea may be right but the timing may be wrong. If your community just completed a massive fund raising effort for a community project, it needs to rest. Build on triggering events that stimulate interest, such as a high school survey that reveals most students see no future in the community. TIMING IS NOT EVERYTHING, BUT SOMETIMES IT IS CLOSE.

3) **Build trust**. Talk to people in person, tell them the truth, keep your word, and listen when they speak. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. LIVE THE VISION.

4) **Establish legitimacy**. Take the time to do the job right. If you rush into this process and leave a lot of key people, organizations, and institutions out of the loop, you will create resistance to an important process. MAKE POLITICS WORK FOR YOU, NOT AGAINST YOU.

5) **Reach out to all segments of your community**. An African proverb states: "It takes a whole village to raise a child." Similarly, it takes a whole community to create a strategic vision and bring it to reality. AN EMPOWERED COMMUNITY ALWAYS STARTS AS AN INVOLVED COMMUNITY.

> *The relevant question is not simply what shall we do tomorrow, but rather what shall we do today in order to get ready for tomorrow.*
>
> Peter Drucker

6) **Develop a grand, magnificent vision.** Create a vision of greatness that captures the imagination and heart of everyone in your community. You can tell a vision of greatness when you are proud to tell others about it, when it requires significant sacrifice, and when it is well worth the effort. YOU ONLY LIVE ON THIS EARTH ONCE, AND YOU DESERVE THE BEST.

7) **Work with those who catch the vision**. Many people don't like to attend meetings, but are very willing to help in many other ways. Become an action group that nurtures, educates, recruits, organizes, facilitates, and empowers the community to achieve its desired future. EMPOWER PEOPLE TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION.

8) **Create early success, sustain the momentum, and commit to the long term**. Your reputation begins when you begin. Start with projects that involve the entire community, that are highly visible, and that demonstrate success. Keep the faith, publicize the results, and help everyone realize that developing a community is a noble and lifetime endeavor. BE CHAMPIONS OF THE VISION.

9) **Don't worry about money at the beginning.** Putting a price tag on a strategic vision and action plan scares people off. The reality is that if the vision is compelling, people will find a way to make it happen. A GREAT VISION ATTRACTS RESOURCES.

If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves.

Thomas Edison

---

10) **Weave your strategic vision and action plan into the very fabric of your community**. Encourage your organizations, businesses, and units of government to integrate their plans and activities with the community's strategic vision and action plan. Take it a step further and encourage them to create their own strategic vision and action plan. ALIGNING THE LOYALTIES, ENERGIES, AND RESOURCES OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS WITH A SHARED VISION LEADS TO A TRULY EMPOWERED, VISIONARY COMMUNITY.

11) **Recognize everyone**. Give people their due; become a Credit Manufacturing Operation; create recognition, credit and glory; bestow it on all who contribute in any way. DO THIS CONSISTENTLY AND WELL, AND YOUR COMMUNITY WILL FLOURISH.

12) **Act as if the future of your community depends on you. It does.** Build relationships with customers, visitors, businesses, retirees, tourists, and resource providers from all over the nation and the world. THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY REQUIRE CONCERTED, COMMUNITY-WIDE ACTION TODAY.

APPENDIX E: WRITTEN AGREEMENTS OF COMMITMENT

Written agreements of commitment, or compacts, have tremendous merit because they provide a mechanism for people to develop a common understanding of what they want to see happen, and to commit to make that a reality. Chris Conway of the Rensselaerville Institute (8) describes three virtues of compacting:

> **Compacts are enabling.** Traditional legal agreements are full of qualifiers put in place to protect the parties and to guard against all contingencies. Compacts are agreements based on a common faith that people can and will take action for a broader good. Expectations influence all of us!
>
> **Compacts have energy**. They gather much more enthusiasm than do the traditional kinds of work plans and charts often used as the only written framework for a project. A key reason: they are very personal.
>
> **Compacts are results driven.** At their best they go beyond the traditional "C" words of communication, coordination, and cooperation. They speak to collaboration, in which an outcome is created that individual parties could not, on their own, achieve.

Project compacts can usefully include:

a) A preamble to set forth a shared vision of what the community should be like.
b) A set of principles or beliefs about what is to be done and how.
c) A statement of what each party or role has to do to make the project successful.
d) A way to sign-on, such that people make an explicit choice to join in a common framework or even bond.

> **NOTE:** The approach described by Conway, and exemplified by The Corbett Compact that follows, incorporates the vision of the community into the compact itself. The next two examples, a Declaration of Economic Partnership from the Partners for a Better Pine Bluff and a Sample Letter of Commitment from the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission's ACE Program, are written agreements or compacts that are agreed to before the strategic vision and action plan is developed. Although we prefer the latter approach, the first will work as well.

The Corbett Compact (Corbett, New York)

> **NOTE:** The Corbett Compact is a rare document in 20th Century America. It is distinctive because it was drafted by people who live in a small village, characterized by low incomes and little formal education – people often perceived as lacking the capacity for competence and vision. The Compact is a joint venture between community residents and an outside partner, and stresses an equal footing and a set of statements to guide all parties to the partnership. (Excerpts from The Corbett Compact by Harold S. Williams and Natalie Hawley, listed in the references of this publication.) We express our thanks to the Center for Community Renewal for this wonderful contribution.

The Corbett Compact

We, the members of the Village of Corbett and The Institute on Man and Science set forth on an adventure which requires our full cooperation and commitment. Like the passengers on the ship Mayflower, we herewith draft and sign this compact setting forth some articles of common faith and agreement.

In so doing, we give our pledge to rebuild Corbett as a small community in which people help each other...in which we can get a good night's sleep...in which our children can range safely...in which we can feel good about our town, our neighbors, and ourselves...in which we do not waste.

At the same time we seek a community in which people live and let live, respecting the rights of others to be different. We want people to grow. Some will grow and stay. Others will grow and leave. But for all of us, Corbett may always be home.

NOTE: The original Corbett Compact was handwritten, and went on to define the responsibility of all citizens in implementing this community renewal project. Within four months, 95 percent of the residents 10 years and older signed the compact, thus becoming charter residents of Corbett.

Declaration of Economic Partnership (Partners for a Better Pine Bluff)

NOTE: Partners for a Better Pine Bluff developed this Declaration of Economic Partnership prior to beginning their strategic visioning process, and were successful in gaining the signatures and support of over 100 organizations and a large number of citizens for this declaration.

Declaration of Economic Partnership

WHEREAS, The Greater Pine Bluff Region has recently reaffirmed its commitment to build on its economic strengths to prepare a stronger future; and

WHEREAS, a broad partnership of community groups and citizens have determined to undertake the design and implementation of a strategy to address all issues and opportunities necessary to maintain and further expand a strong and vibrant economy; and

WHEREAS, to position the Greater Pine Bluff Region to compete in the increasingly global economy will require a carefully prepared strategy that is comprehensive, practical, specific, and action oriented; and

WHEREAS, such a strategy must build on the Region's economic strengths and deal practically with the weaknesses to provide a vision of the Greater Pine Bluff Region in the year 2020; and

WHEREAS, PARTNERS FOR A BETTER PINE BLUFF has been formed to develop a strategic planning process and economic and community development program to guide the Greater Pine Bluff Region in its pursuit of excellence; and

WHEREAS, to succeed, such a strategy must establish a cooperative planning process inclusive of government, business, education, nonprofit organizations, labor, minority groups, students, media, and all citizens of the Greater Pine Bluff Region; and

WHEREAS, to make the process inclusive requires true partnerships and allowing time for substantive input from all stakeholders of the community;

THEREFORE, be it resolved on this day, the 26th day of November, 1990, that the undersigned partners endorse and will participate in the process for developing and implementing a Strategic Plan for Economic and Community Development for the Greater Pine Bluff Region.

SAMPLE LETTER OF COMMITMENT

Our community, _____, wishes to participate in the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission's ACE Program. The leadership of

_____
(community)

fully realizes that this program requires a dedicated effort by everyone. By making application for this program, we are pledging our honest efforts to become designated as an ACE Community.

The program requires the existence of a local economic development organization with the sole authority for the economic development that includes, but is not limited to, the authority to buy, sell, and negotiate the prices for land and buildings. The name of that organization is _____. The permanent mailing address of the organization is _____.

_____	_____
Mayor	Contact Person ED organization
_____	_____
Date	Date
Address:	Address:
_____	_____
_____	_____
Telephone _____	Telephone _____

APPENDIX F: THEMES, SLOGANS, MOTTOS, AND BIG, HAIRY, AUDACIOUS GOALS

Often we find a theme, slogan, or motto that is very descriptive, catchy, and even compelling. These phrases can be very powerful if they capture the essence of something and are expressed in bold, compelling language. They can be an effective means to communicate the essence of a vision and an easy way for people in and out of the community to remember the vision. The following theme expresses an overall vision and an underlying principle:

Example Theme (from Partners for a Better Pine Bluff)

- Economic Success is Our Goal, Community Partnership is Our Plan

Slogans (or mottos) can be used to describe a place in a way that is compelling and inviting. A classic example would be Moses' depiction of Canaan as "the promised land" and the "land of milk and honey." The following slogans connect these communities to their particular geographical features, to their history, or to some other unique characteristic:

Example Slogans That Describe Communities

- Arkadelphia (AR) - A Great Place to Call Home and Just Down the Road!
- Branson (MO) - The World's Greatest Family Entertainment Center
- Conway (AR) - Gateway to the Ozarks
- Eureka Springs (AR) - Over One Hundred Years In The Making. Make time To See It All.
- Hope (AR) - Birthplace of President Clinton
- Independence (MO) - Follow the Trail of History
- Magnolia (AR) - Hospitality and Beauty of the Old South
- Stuttgart (AR) - Duck Capitol of the World
- The Ouachita River Valley of Montgomery County (AR) - Scenic Beauty, Clean Air, Friendly Folks, and Good Fishin'
- Walnut (IA) - Antique City

Big, hairy, audacious goals (BHAGS) are **compelling statements of extraordinary achievement** that mobilize and focus an entire organization or community toward reaching that visionary achievement. James Collins and Jerry Porras (6) state that a BHAG should be so exciting and bold that it will continue to stimulate action after the initial leaders are gone.

Example Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals

- Branson (MO) - The World's Greatest Family Entertainment Center
- Stuttgart (AR) - Duck Capitol of the World
- To put a man on the moon (NASA)
- To produce a car inexpensive enough for everyone to afford (Henry Ford)
- A personal computer on every desk and in every home (Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft Corporation)
- A huge, world-spanning plane (the 747 by Boeing)
- Smoke-free America by the year 2000

In summary, themes, slogans, mottos, and BHAGS can serve very useful purposes, but they do not take the place of a strategic vision and action plan in your community.

APPENDIX G: BENCHMARK INDICATORS

Some examples of benchmark indicators were given in the text of this publication. The excellent work of the Commission for Arkansas' Future should provide some additional guidance to you in selecting benchmark indicators.

The Commission for Arkansas' Future developed a system of benchmark indicators called Arkansas AIMS (Accountability Indicator Measurement System). The purpose of the AIMS indicators is to translate the vision and goals of the "Designing Arkansas: The State of the Future" report into measurable outcomes.

Critical Indicators are those short-term indicators related to urgent priorities in which progress is needed in the next five years. **Core Indicators** are those long-term indicators which are fundamental, enduring measures of the state's vitality and health. The priority indicators are listed below by the three groups of Economic Vitality, Our People, and Quality of Life. For more information, refer to "Arkansas AIMS (Accountability Indicator Measurement System) for the state of Arkansas," September 1994, The Commission for Arkansas' Future, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Priority Indicators for Economic Vitality

Critical Indicators

Annual Average Pay/Average Weekly Earnings
Annual Unemployment Rate
Job Growth Rate
New Job Quality
Employment in Value-Added Industries
Development Capital
Birth Rate of New Businesses
Exports

Core Indicators

Per Capita Personal Income
Family and Household Income
Scientists and Engineers
Cost of Living
Infrastructure Maintenance
Gross State Product

Priority Indicators for Our People

Critical Indicators

Kindergarten Readiness
Student Skills
Post-Secondary Education
Remediation
Technology
Higher Education and Post-Secondary Graduation Rates
Births to Teenagers
Births to Unwed Mothers

Core Indicators

Education Attainment Levels of the Adult Population
Literacy
ACT Test Scores
Higher Education Graduates
Poverty

Priority Indicators for Quality of Life

Critical Indicators

Accessible and Appropriate Health Care
Cost of Health Care
Prenatal Care
Infant Mortality
Low Birth Weight Babies
Child Immunization
Crime Index
Other Crimes
Arrest Rates
Conviction Rates
Prisons
Violent and Chronic Offenders

Core Indicators

Death Rates
Drinking Water Standards
Water Supply
Sewage Water/Effluent Discharges
Air Quality
Total Energy Usage
Home Ownership

APPENDIX H: BU!LDING SCENARIOS

Community groups often need to go beneath the surface to examine the likely results of their development efforts. Building Scenarios is a very useful way to do this, as it allows you to describe different scenarios (alternative futures), and discover where they are likely to lead. The following example utilizes residential development as a scenario/development strategy. For more information, see the publication by J. David Deshler and "Communities Creating Their Futures" in the References.

Scenario: Bedford County will become a bedroom community for the adjoining metro area.

In order to attract more people to the county, we are going to market Bedford County as a wonderful place to raise your family, with good schools, safe neighborhoods, and friendly people, all within an easy commute of the adjoining metro area.

Benchmark Indicators

* Number of residents who work outside of the county
* Traffic counts to and from the county
* New housing starts
* County population

Underlying Assumptions

* Growth will be good for business and for the county.
* This will create more jobs here, and create opportunities for our children to come back and live in the county.
* New people will make a positive contribution to the county and to our community life.
* We will be able to capitalize on our proximity to jobs, without suffering adverse effects on the environment.
* We will not suffer any major land use conflicts between agriculture and non-agricultural land use .
* Sales and property tax income from retail trade and new residential construction will more than compensate for increased demand for government services.
* Energy costs will remain relatively low for the foreseeable future, making commuting into the city a viable option for many people.

Strategies

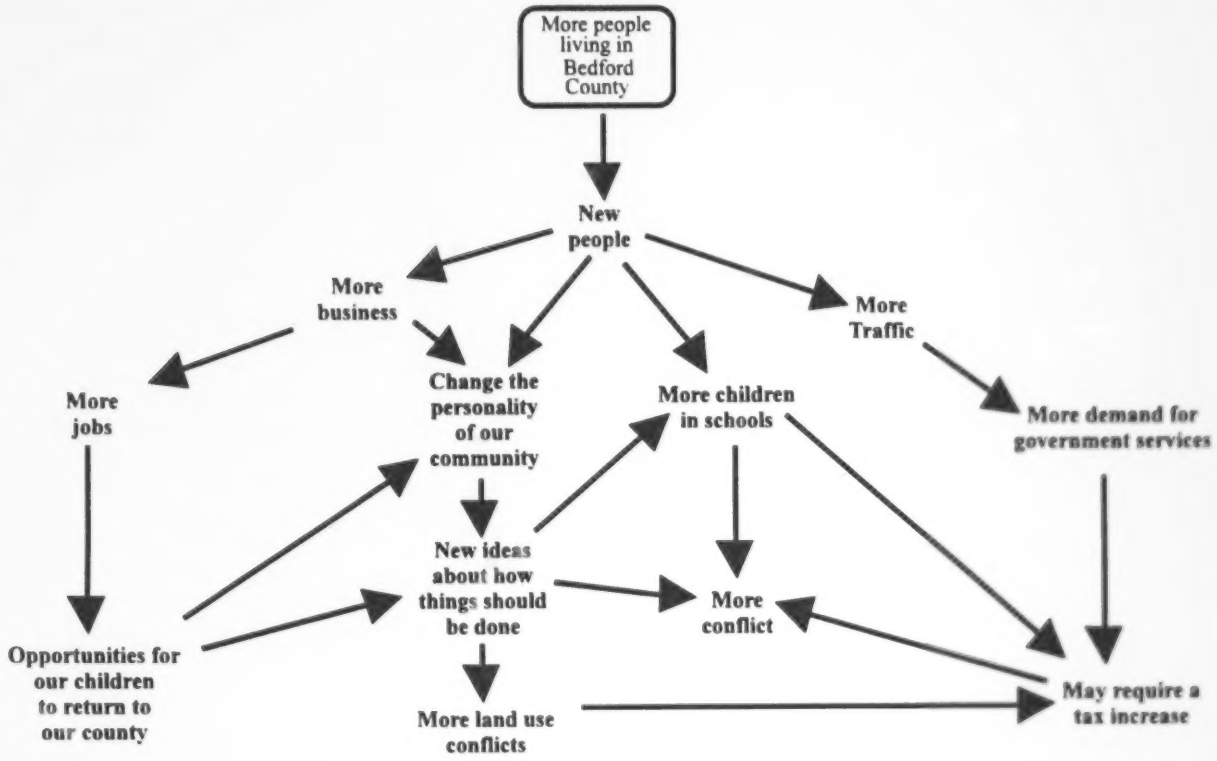
* Assess the strengths and weaknesses of our community.
* Develop a marketing plan to target people not living in the community.
* Focus on families with children.

Groups Involved and Affected

* Chamber of Commerce
* Schools
* City and county government
* Realtors, developers, and bankers
* Law enforcement officials
* Civic organizations
* Landowners

Consequences (Draw a Consequences Map)

Begin by stating your scenario in brief terms, then describing the consequences of the scenario, with arrows to indicate the effects of these consequences.


More people living in Bedford County
New people
More business
More Traffic
More jobs
Change the personality of our community
More children in schools
More demand for government services
New ideas about how things should be done
More conflict
Opportunities for our children to return to our county
More land use conflicts
May require a tax increase

Summary – Threats and Opportunities of This Scenario

Threats

* Increased demand for government services, such as schools, could overwhelm exiting facilities and require tax increases.
* New residents would likely have different expectations, leading to more community conflict as well as land use conflict and the demand for planning and zoning.

Opportunities

* Is very likely to be successful, due to problems in urban areas.
* New people bring new ideas and expertise that can be tapped for development efforts in the community.
* New residents spur economic growth.

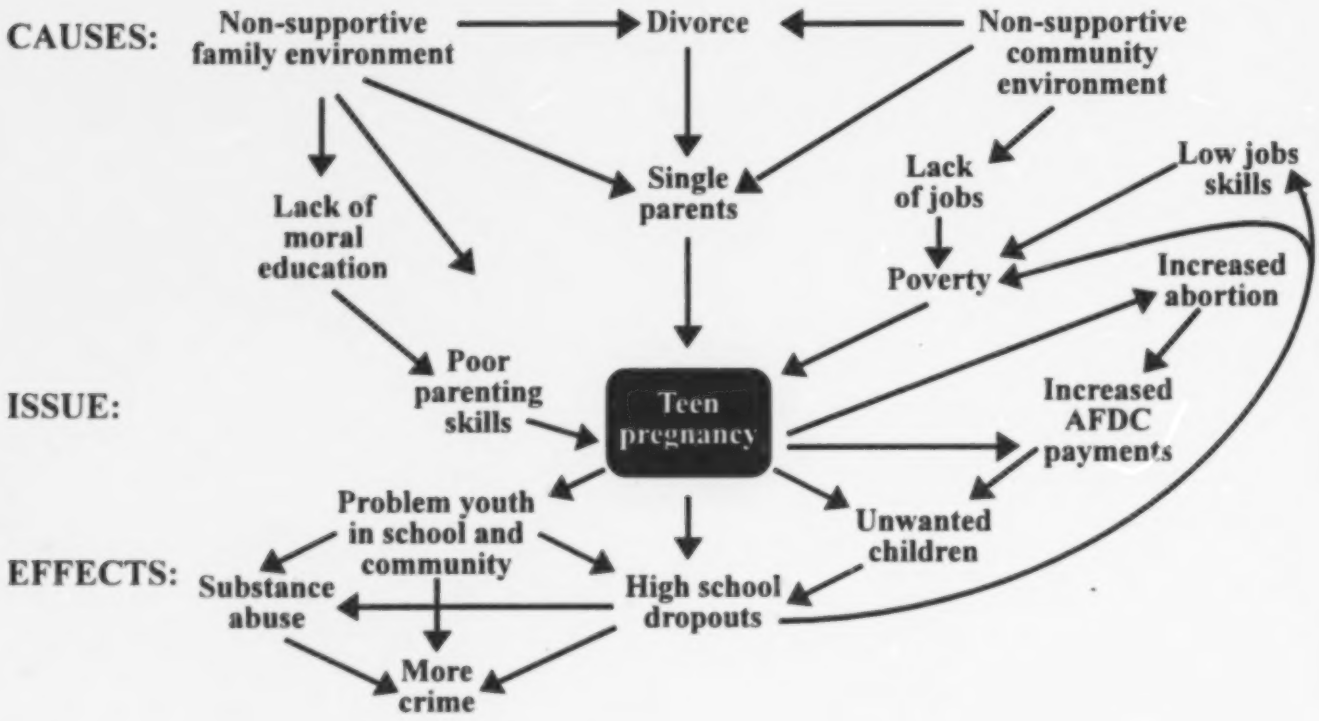
Alternative Scenarios

* Become a retirement center.
* Develop a strong tourism industry.
* Focus on industrial recruitment.
* Develop a supportive environment for small business development.

NOTE: Scenario building can also be used to understand the impact of environmental forces on your community and its future. As an example scenario, high energy prices would have real consequences on a strategy based on commuting. Draw a consequences map and identify threats and opportunities to use this approach.

APPENDIX I: CAUSE AND EFFECT DIAGRAM

This simple diagram is a very useful exercise to use when analyzing difficult issues, particularly in the social and economic arenas. Simply write the issue in the box and then begin to list the causes and effects of this issue. Draw arrows between the causes and effects that are related, and you will discover many points of intervention to address a particular issue. The following is an example, not a comprehensive treatment of the issue.



Possible strategies from the Cause and Effect Diagram:

Create mentor program to assist youth stay in school.
Initiate youth entrepreneurship program in the school.
Use character education curriculum that has been successful in other schools.
Offer parenting education classes in the community.
Create summer job program for youth.

APPENDIX J: A STORY OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Please take a moment, pull away from your work, and join me for a reflection about the future. The year is 2005. Although your hair is perhaps a bit thinner, you are really the same person you were back in 1995. You are a little wiser perhaps, and you have seen **some extraordinary events take place in our nation and in the world.**

The explosion of information and technology has made incredible sources of information and technology available at your fingertips, at the very same time it has weakened ties in your local community. The economy, changes in the marketplace, and events in this region have tested the leadership of your community.

You are going to a community-wide celebration to mark the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the next millennium. Just think – **the 20th century**, the century in which we lived most of our lives, the century which brought us so many wonderful advances as well as two world wars, has come to an end. It **is now history**.

The celebration is being held in the community center, which was built back in the 1970s. A large banner hangs on the outside of the building stating the name of your community with **"Celebrating the Past and Embracing the Next Millennium."** The building is decorated with flowers and streamers, and enthusiastic high school students welcome you at the door with programs. As you enter, you hear the school band warming up and see many familiar faces - neighbors and other members of the community you have known for several years.

These are the fellow citizens with whom you have held many meetings on municipal, county, school, and economic development issues, **seeking what is best for the community**, not always being successful. You also see the faces of individuals who have moved away, and have come back to celebrate their roots. They are glad to see you, and they come to this event with a sense of expectancy, of anticipation. The big screen is now in place to hear the keynote speaker, a former resident now living in London. You are also glad that several who were not able to come back for the occasion will be able to see it all by satellite.

You remember over 20 years ago when your community wrote and produced a play to dramatize its first 150 years. Now the 21st Century Committee was put together to commemorate the advancements and progress of the last century by developing a similar production. You were asked to write the narrative for the 1990s, because of your involvement in community development and improvement efforts during the last decade of the century. You were encouraged to cover **how the community has come together** or failed to do so, **its accomplishments, and its spirit.**

Take a moment to put yourself in this situation in the year 2005. **What would you like to be able to say?** You know you must be truthful; these are local folks here – they know what has taken place. What would you like to say about how the community has come together? About the involvement of its citizens? About its accomplishments? About its vision for the future then and its vision for the future now?

The critical question for you today is: if things continue as they are in your community, will you be able to tell about **a coming together of the community** in 1995, about **developing a grand vision** of this community for the 21st century, and **extraordinary efforts that brought that vision to reality**? Or will you have to say that we did OK, knowing in your heart that as a community you didn't rise to the occasion, you didn't set aside past differences and other priorities to plan for and work for your future in the 21st century?

If not us, who?
If not now, when?
If it is to be, it is up to us!

STRATEGIC VISION AND ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

OVERALL PROCESS

Question 1) Where have we been? (Learning from the past.)

a) Describe why our community was formed (its purpose) and how our community has changed since then (in its economic, social, and environmental dimensions).

b) Significant, defining events in our community in the:

1970s

1980s

1990s

c) Reflections on our past:

Question 2) Where are we now? (Examining the present.)

a) Describe our community today in light of the changes discussed earlier. How would you describe it to a stranger?

_____

_____

_____

_____

b) Draw a strategic map of our community in the center of our region:

c) SWOT analysis of our community:

Strengths	Opportunities
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Weaknesses	**Threats**
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Question 3) Where do we want to go? (Describing the emerging environment and our desired future.)

a) Forces and trends in our region that will impact our future:

b) Forces and trends in our nation and world that will impact our future:

c) Threats and opportunities posed by these forces and trends:

d) Our Vision:

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ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

_____ Action Team

Question 4) How will we get there? (Developing a plan of action)

Chairperson: _____

Team Members: _____

_____

a) Vision Ideas for this theme/action team: _____

_____

_____

b) Long-Term Goal: _____

_____

_____

c) Possible Strategies: _____

_____

_____

d) Project #_____: _____

_____

_____

e) Key Players: those organizations, companies, agencies, institutions, and individuals in our community that need to be involved to make this project successful. (Draw a **community resource map** for this theme/action team.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

f) Other resources, assets, and capabilities **within the community** that would be helpful. (Add to our community resource map.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

g) Resources, assets, and capabilities **outside of our community** that could be helpful, such as other community organizations, churches, corporations, banks, foundations, governmental agencies, and regional, state, or national associations. (Draw them on a **regional resource map** for this issue.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

h) Implementation Plan

WHAT will be done	**WHO** is responsible	**WHEN** will it be done	**RESOURCES** that will be used

i) Implementation Time Chart (OPTIONAL)

Projects	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
_____										
_____										
_____										
_____										
_____										

(continued on next page)

Question 5) How will we know when we get there? (Measuring success.) OPTIONAL

_____ Action Team

Project: _____

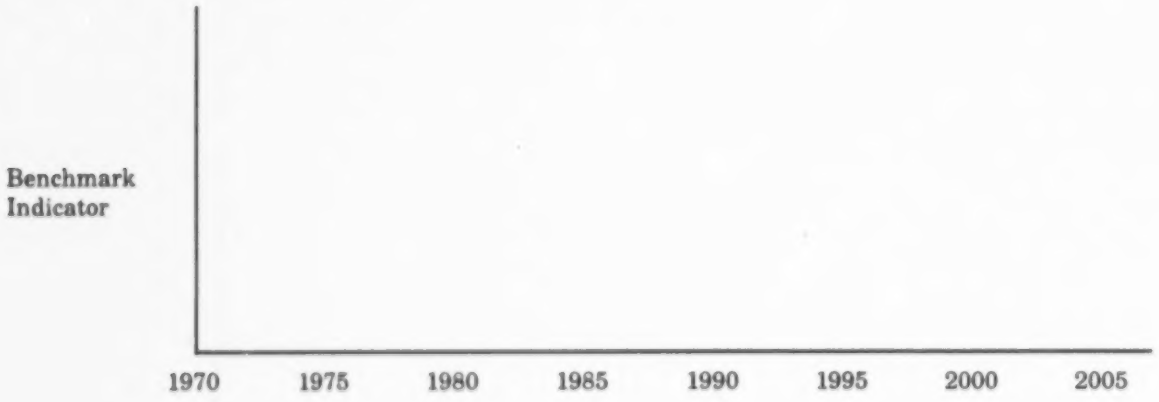
a) Project Accomplishments: Describe what we want to accomplish with this project in very concrete terms, and set targets.

Accomplishments	One-Year Target	Five-Year Target

b) Project Impact: Select **benchmark indicators** to reveal the impact of this project on our community or county and chart them on a graph or bar chart, including what they have been in the past and our targets of what we want these benchmark indicators to be 2, 5, and 10 years from now.

Benchmark Indicators and Targets

Benchmark Indicator	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	Targets 2000	2005



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VISION

Vision is seeing beyond the immediacy of the day;
it is understanding the temper of the times, the outlines of the future,
and how to move from one to the other.

Vision is seeing where life is headed, and how to make that
transition from here to there most effectively.

Vision is seeing what life could be like while dealing with life as it is.

Vision is having some sense of the inner impulse of the public soul
and then giving it voice.

Vision is seeing the potential purpose that is hidden in the chaos of the moment,
yet which could bring to birth new possibilities for a people.

William Van Dusen Wishare
A World in Search of Meaning

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